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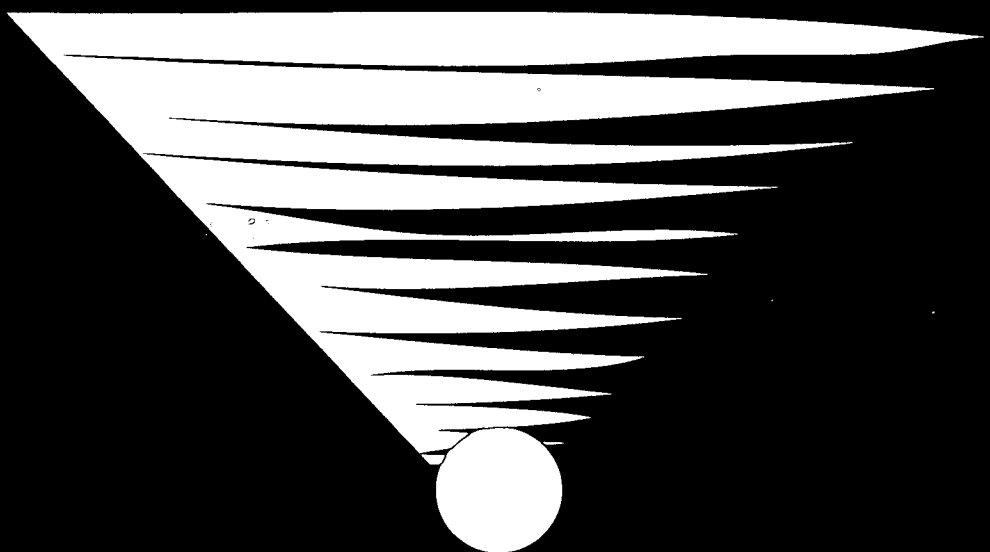
ABSTRACT

This book contains 13 papers examining topical issues in vocational education and training (VET) in Victoria, Australia. The following papers are included: "Vocational Education and Schooling: The Changing Scene" (Jane Kenway, Sue Willis, Peter Watkins, Karen Tregenza); "The Enterprise Approach" (James Mulraney); "VET Programs at James Harrison College" (John Bromilow); "'Great Organisations Dream Great Dreams" (David Gallagher); "An Investigation into the Impact of Mentoring Unemployment" (Barbara Hammond); "Issues Confronting Vocational Education in Victorian Schools in the Late 1990s" (Karen Tregenza, Jane Kenway, Peter Watkins); "Participant Pathways and Outcomes in Vocational Education and Training: 1992-95" (Peter Dwyer, Aramiha Harwood, Geoff Poynter, Johanna Wyn); "Paths to Pathways: Educational Pathways for Educationally Disadvantaged Young People" (Jennifer Angwin, Louise Laskey); "Enhancing Girls' Post School Options through Career and Vocational Education" (Jane Kenway, Sue Willis); "Vocational Education Programs: Managing Risk in a Risk Society" (Peter Watkins); "Reframing the Discourse of Skill" (Nancy S. Jackson); "Learning about Poverty, Disadvantage and Justice" (Basil N. Varghese); and "Spectacle in the Dark: Youth as Transgression, Display, and Repression" (Leslie G. Roman). Individual papers contain references. (MN)



VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TODAY
Topical Issues

Edited by Jane Kenway
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Section Three: Commentaries and Contexts

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING: THE CHANGING SCENE[1]

JANE KENWAY AND SUE WILLIS
WITH PETER WATKINS AND KAREN TREGENZA

For some time there have been considerable pressures for change in the post-compulsory years of schooling and, in particular, in vocational education for young people in and out of school. Equally, there has been considerable pressure on governments to find creative solutions to unemployment and to create transitions from unemployment to work. There have been many and varied responses to these pressures at all levels of government and in educational and other organisations. Section One of this book is entitled *Vocational Education in Practice* and it includes short descriptive papers by school teachers James Mulraney, John Bromilow and David Gallagher. These offer accounts of particular schools' and regions' responses in Victoria and South Australia. The fourth paper by Barbara Hammond, offers an example of a specific approach to assisting unemployed people to return to work—namely, business mentoring. Clearly, these snapshots of practice do not represent the entire range of responses to the pressures to change[2]. However, they give an indication of some of the things that are actually happening 'on the ground' as policy makers at Commonwealth and state levels develop and redevelop policies designed to enhance the transitions from education and from unemployment to work. Let us offer some back-ground which helps to explain why such changes have been deemed necessary and which illuminates the policy pathways to new practices in schools.

The post-compulsory years

At one time, the majority of young people left school at the end of the compulsory years of schooling and either entered the workforce directly or undertook vocational training. Amongst year 10 school leavers, many young men, and some young women, had some assurance about their long term paid work destinations through apprenticeships or on-the-job training in organisations such as banks and the public service. For those students who completed year 12, there was additional assurance of 'pay off'. A considerable number entered higher education, others entered TAFE and the rest entered the workforce directly. Even those who were not particularly successful in years 11 and 12 were

privileged in looking for work by virtue simply of having participated in schooling beyond year 10.

The situation now is much more complicated. On the one hand, there is the total structural collapse of the full-time teenage labour market which has convinced the great majority of students and their parents that senior secondary education is necessary. On the other hand, the investment of two years of their lives in years 11 and 12 is no longer sufficient to offer young people any assurance about their paid work destinations.

Our analysis of the figures of 1992 showed that, 26 per cent of 1991 year 12 school leavers proceeded immediately to full time higher education and 14 per cent to full-time TAFE. Thus, only 40 per cent of the year 12 completers gained a full-time place in tertiary education. A further 34 per cent were employed, but only half of them were in full-time work, and the remaining 26 per cent were not employed at all. The unemployment rate for all school leavers was 37 per cent with the underemployment rate quite clearly higher. Moving directly from school to full-time work is hardly an option for the majority of young people and this is particularly so for young women. Indeed, amongst the whole cohort of 18-19 year olds, some 38 per cent of young men are in full-time employment compared with 27 per cent of young women. At a quick glance, it would appear that these patterns remain today despite a huge array of policies designed to change them.

Given these rather dramatic statistics why do we persuade young people to complete years 11 and 12. The reason that resonates most strongly with students and their parents is that the greater the number who gain a year 12 certificate the more disadvantaged are those who do not. In 1992, amongst school leavers who had not completed year 12, the unemployment rate for young women was 57 per cent and for young men was 45 per cent'. Amongst all age groups, those without a year 12 certificate make up the majority of the long term unemployed.

The Commonwealth Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, David Kemp observed in 1996 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 (Kemp 1996a, p. 2).

Whilst increasing the numbers of students who complete school will not increase the number of jobs available, the current view is that we should promote equity of access to paid work by ensuring that all young people begin their adult lives with the basic prerequisites for economic independence. This clearly is of particular importance for groups of students who traditionally have been disadvantaged in entry to the labour market and who are most 'at risk' of long term unemployment. These include, for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, working class students and students with disabilities.

The 'policy solution' to these various problems is to 'encourage' teenagers to complete a full secondary education but 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 and some assurance of outcomes from their additional investment in education. In other words, schools are to provide vocational education.

Vocational education in schools

There appears to be considerable and broadly based agreement that the curriculum of senior secondary schools has been rather too narrow and needs to change. Within State and Commonwealth educational policy schools are now encouraged or required 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 training.

Vocational pathways

In Australian schools the upper secondary years have traditionally been devoted to academic studies. By international standards we are unusual in the large proportion of 16-18 year olds who are in schools and the narrow range of (academic) subjects taken by them. In many cases, all courses are defined by their relationship to higher education, albeit often in the negative. Thus, traditionally, we have tertiary entrance subjects and non-tertiary entrance subjects; we have a pathway (into higher education) and we have dead-ends.

The pathway from school to the professions via higher education is the most explicit and structured of all pathways between school and post-school destinations. That is, the use of the tertiary entrance score (TES) as a route to higher education is clear cut, widespread and accessible. Even given variations in the score needed for entrance from year to year, the outcome from a TES is quite

predictable—a place in higher education for those who attain above a particular score.

Schools have, however, been considerably less successful in building for students pathways to destinations other than higher education. It is suggested that there is a 'distaste' in the Australian educational context for the notion that schools should provide specifically vocational preparation. This perspective is captured in the following remark by Richard Sweet:

> [W]e have ... persisted with the view that 'training' has nothing to do with 'education' long after most of the rest of the world has abandoned the distinction, if it ever adopted it. This isolation of the development of occupational competence from the mainstream of education has affected students' willingness to participate in it, and parents' willingness to encourage their children to take what is seen to be less prestigious and educationally more limiting options. It has resulted in vocational preparation being attached to paid, productive labour, and this has had consequences for employers' willingness to pay for it (1991, p. 2-3).

Indeed, Australia has been unusual in that the great majority of students in years 11 and 12 undertake the academic pathway regardless of whether their hopes, intentions or predictions about the future include higher education. Certainly, this is partly because there is no 'parity of esteem' between courses which are directed at preparation for higher education and courses with different emphases. However, in most education systems in Australia, differently defined pathways have not usually been acknowledged by accreditation bodies. Where attempts are being made to formalise them, pathways other than those academic still tend to 'lack defined and accessible destinations' (Schools Council 1994, p. 13). Further, vocational programs are largely regarded as tracks for 'non-academic' students.

The terrible irony of all of this is that students and parents regard improving their employability as a major purpose of 'staying at school'. Precisely what this means is, of course, less clear but students and parents, it seems, know that they want a good preparation for working life combined with recognised qualifications.

In the first half of the 1990s the Commonwealth Labor government (1983-1996) developed a series of reports associated with the National Training Agenda. These claimed that more flexible pathways between education, training and employment must be developed. It was argued that these must provide for integration and/or articulation of school and TAFE based programs with each other and with work-based programs (Finn 1991, ESFC 1992). These proposed an alignment of post-compulsory schooling, structured training and demonstrated

work skills. Further, they proposed the development of a Standards Framework the purposes of which were to:

- enable educators from different education and training sectors to focus on desirable vocational outcomes and to 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.

Defining and accrediting vocational preparation

Let us take a closer look at the proposals to redefine and accredit vocational preparation in schools. The Finn review recommended the identification of key employment related competencies as a way of bridging the gulf between general and vocational education. It concludes that there are certain things all young people need to learn in preparation for employment, and identifies six key areas of competence which should provide the basis of a universal post-compulsory curriculum.

Early in 1992 the Carmichael Report (ESFC 1992) proposed a new competency-based vocational certificate training system. Its targets are that by 2001, 90 per cent of all 19-years-olds should have completed year 12 or an initial post-school qualification, and 90 per cent of all 20-year-olds with a recognised vocational qualification of at least Level 2 in the ASF. The Carmichael recommendations led to the establishment of the Australian Vocational Certificate (AVC), a unified system of providing entry-level training designed to replace existing apprenticeships and traineeships over a two year period beginning in 1995. Four arrangements were planned for providing vocational education and training:

- school-based,
- part-time work/part-time study,
- a vocational year (Year 13), and
- employment based training.

The focus of the Finn report is education—largely schools—and the competencies with which it concerns itself are generic, albeit work related. The focus of the Carmichael report, on the other hand, is entry level training both institutional (schools, TAFE and private providers) or work based. It is concerned with vocationally-specific competencies. Integral to the Carmichael

recommendations are the notions of 'competency-based delivery, assessment and certification, open training markets and articulation and credit transfer' (EFSC 1992, p. 20).

In addition, 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 established principles to provide for nationally-consistent assessment and reporting of achievement of the Key Competencies.

Given the policy shift in favour of vocational education in schools, the development of the Australian Vocational Certificate (AVC) has been most pertinent to secondary school teachers. It suggested that schools could and should take considerable responsibility for providing vocational preparation leading to levels 1 and 2 of the Australian Standards Framework. Furthermore, it insisted that this preparation should, indeed must inevitably, involve closer links between schools, TAFE/ private providers and industry. Thus school students were to be able to access vocational qualifications by undertaking vocational subjects, including accredited work placement, while still at school.

The White Paper on employment released in May 1994 added another layer to the already complex picture. It announced the creation of a new vocational pathway to be known as student traineeships. Students were to gain recognised vocational skills as part of their year 11 and 12 program by a blend of structured placements in the workplace with off-the-job training through TAFE and other providers. As Crean & Free (1994, p. 2) said:

> Students will leave year 12 with both an academic qualification (HSC/VCE) and a recognised vocational qualification. For students this will mean an easier bridge into employment—with some qualifications and recognised skills. For employers it will mean that they can recruit motivated and capable school leavers who have already received some career preparation.

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.

Just as schools and systems were coming to grips with the Labor approach it was revised under the Liberal/National Party government which developed the New Apprenticeship (and traineeship) system. This is part of its National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training (VET) 1998-2003. The Australian Vocational Certificate has become the National Training Framework (NTF) which seeks to be more simple and flexible ('user friendly') than its predecessor and to establish clearer links between training qualifications and the Australian Qualifications Framework which includes schools and universities and provides certificates, diplomas and degrees (*Australian Qualifications Framework, Introduction to the AQF*, 1996).

The NTF has two key components; new recognition arrangements and 'training packages' (*Australian Training*, June 1997, p. 6). These build on but also alter previous developments in ways designed to:

> grow a more competitive and effective market for vocational education and training. Such a market will promote increased opportunities for users of the system to choose providers, modes of training provision and for training organisations to have more flexibility to respond to clients. [and will] promote user choice (*Assuring Quality and Choice in National Training* 1997, p. 1).

The policy documents indicate that 'New Apprenticeships in schools will be as similar as practicable to the regulatory and administrative arrangements relating to New Apprenticeships generally' (*Australian Training*, June 1997, p. 3) They will thus be based very much on the training market, 'use choice' principles which now dominate the VET agenda. The defining characteristics of the new apprenticeships are:

- a registered training agreement,
- a negotiated training program leading to a nationally recognise qualification, and
- paid work and structured training (*Australian Training* June 1997, p. 2).

It is expected that the New Apprenticeship system 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. It is also hoped that apprenticeships will be created in industries and enterprises which

previously did not offer them; for example, sport and recreation, health, new information media, the service industries and so on.

An interesting sign of the times and the likely future is the *McDonalds* traineeship scheme. At the end of June 1997, the fast food chain *McDonalds* announced a scheme to directly link its work-place training program with the public education sector in Australia. Its Enterprise Specific Competency Standards have been approved by the National Training Board. Also, *McDonalds* trainees can now gain credit in the post compulsory secondary qualification known as the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). Indeed, 'satisfactory' students will score a Tertiary Entrance Ranking bonus calculated at 10% of the average of their best four VCE subjects. *McDonalds* is responsible for all selection, training and assessment but the award is given by the state education system. Even so, the actual selection, content and processes of the work-place training program are not open to full public scrutiny. In the interests of maintaining its competitive advantage *McDonalds* has been able to persuade national and state accrediting authorities that this must be confidential.

This scheme is one of an increasing number which connect schools to private training providers via recent changes in Vocational Education and Training (VET). However, this particular development is significant for many reasons not the least being that it allows school students who work part time to gain training accreditation (with global portability) while at school—and at no financial cost to the school or student. For these reasons it has been welcomed by certain students and in certain education circles.

The *McDonalds* scheme has raised many matters of concern which include the following. It privileges one enterprise over others in the fast food industry and *McDonalds* students over other non apprenticeship/traineeship students who work part time while at school. It thus opens the floodgates to similar demands from other such outlets and to a loss of quality control by education systems. This enterprise is a US multi national company which provides an Australian education credential which is not open to public scrutiny or revision by Australian educators whose students it will select, train and certify. This leaves schools and systems in an awkward position with regard to their responsibilities to students and raises questions about the ways in which redress might be addressed once such VET has been out-sourced. It also raises questions about the distinction between vocational education and vocational training and whether such students will ever get the opportunity to address the contentious issues associated with the world of work and with their rights as worker-citizens. Further, it raises questions about where the connections between education systems, schools and *McDonalds* might stop. For example, will Australia

eventually have a *McDonalds* Hamburger University as exists in the US and if so what might be the knock on effects?

Only time will tell whether the latest changes in the field of vocational education in schools will have the desired effects. Meanwhile, in an environment of constant change, as Section One shows, schools and other organisations continue to try to plan and to make decisions about what is best for students and unemployed people. And, as Sections Two and Three of this book show, researchers continue to point to the effects of such policies and to identify issues for further consideration by policy makers, schools and others. As they demonstrate, there are many issues involved and interests at stake.

Section Two of the book is called *Pathway Reflections*. In this section three research projects are outlined. We (Tregenza, Kenway & Watkins) identify matters of concern and contention confronting vocational education in Victorian schools in the late 1990s, pointing to school/employer, school/labour market, school/TAFE. school/students issues. Dwyer, Harwood, Poynter and Wyn outline their research on participant pathways and outcomes in vocational education and training. The overall objective of their research is to examine student aspirations, experience and outcomes. Their preliminary findings point to a range of matters including; the complexity of the 'complexity of patterns' of young people's movement through their post school education and training and their views of the education and training which they are offered. As result of their research with educationally disadvantaged young people in schools and vocational programs Angwin and Laskey point to the need for 'paths to pathways'. They make the case that such young people find it very difficult to gain access to current pathways, they are thus discouraged from full participation in schools' VET programs while at the same time other school arrangements also prove unhelpful to them. Angwin and Laskey point out that additional and alternative approaches are needed for such students. In our chapter (Kenway & Willis) we identify and critically analyse the main lines of thinking which have informed programs designed to enhance girls' post-school options through career education, pointing to the strengths and weaknesses of each. These all have implications for vocational education for girls at school.

Section Three is called *Commentaries and Contexts* and contains four, discussions which take a more theoretical and reflective stance. Drawing from some topical theoretical frameworks in the field of sociology, Watkins points to issues associated with risk trust and security in vocational education. He argues that current vocational education programs can be understood as an attempt to manage the risks inherent for young people in the changing workplace, mentioned briefly below. Varghese, from the Brotherhood of St Lawrence, makes known the work and programs put in place by this organisation to deal with

disadvantaged youth and poverty in our society. The themes of both papers resonate with the concerns expressed by Dwyer, Harwood, Poynter and Wyn and by Angwin and Laskey. Jackson, takes a sociological look at the discourses of skill which so permeate discussions of vocational education. She offers an analysis of popular and employers concepts of skill showing how they reinscribe power relations. She then takes some preliminary steps towards reworking the notion of skill so that it is more rich and connects better with what it actually means to learn to and about work. This resonates with themes developed in Kenway and Willis about worker/citizens and with Varghese's concern to move students through a learning process which results in what he calls 'unconscious competence'.

The final chapter by Roman invites us to consider issues of vocational education, youth employment and unemployment in a wider theoretical and ideological context. It is worth observing here that the field of VET in schools and beyond often has a very narrow view of both young people and their contexts. Drawing on North American experience, Roman's paper describes and analyses the moral panics which have developed in the public domain around the categories of youth and youth at risk. Drawing on powerful feminist and cultural studies theoretical frameworks, she shows how these impact on policy agendas often at the expense of research which is structural change. It is well worth speculating about the implications of her analysis for the Australian context.

An understanding of structural changes in the worlds of work is very important for vocational educators. Without it they can neither appreciate the full range of their students needs nor offer them the necessary understandings about their futures as workers. Let us conclude then with some brief comments on the changing nature of work.

Over the last ten years there have been profound shifts in the way work has been organised, disorganised, distributed and not distributed (Rifkin 1995). It has shifted from being mainly in the manufacturing sector to being primarily of a service nature. This emphasis on the service sector has been combined with a quest for greater flexibility . The drive for flexibility encompasses three major dimensions: a more flexible mode of production, as exemplified by the notion of continuous improvement, the utilisation of technology which enhances flexible production as indicated with the increasing use of the computer, and lastly, the employment of labour which is flexible and which will engage in flexible work processes. This latter dimension is exemplified in employers' search for greater numerical flexibility (see Watkins 1994).

Numerical flexibility entails the increasing use of temporary or casual labour. Australia is one of the world 'leaders' in the casualisation of labour. Campbell (in Rance 1997) has shown that, in the fourteen years until 1995, the number of

casual employees more than doubled in Australia. This occurred across all industries, all occupations and all workplaces. The driving force for employers has been the drive for greater profits as casual workers do not receive many of the benefits that permanent employees receive. By being classified as casual these workers lose most of the standard rights, benefits and protection's that used to be taken for granted in the workplace.

As a means of containing the risks to young people in such an economy Vocational Education and Training schemes now command a new level of importance and popularity within the education sector. However, as is implied by a number of chapters in this collection, young people need more than the development of skills and competencies—although, if defined in a fertile and meaningful manner, these are clearly important. In addition though, vocational education should help students to critically reflect on what are considered to be the 'legitimate' degrees of involvement and participation in decision making in the workplace. As the research and development work by Simon, Dippo and Schenke (1991) and Kincheloe, (1995) indicates, they also need to understand the world of work and the new world work order; to discern for example, the reasons why the workplace is changing; why technology is used in certain ways and the reasons for the present structuring and restructuring of the workplace. As the papers throughout this book have implied, vocational education in schools and beyond must seek to enhance the life of work and the work of life for all young people.[3]

Notes

1 This introduction draws in part from Kenway, J. & Willis, S. with Junor, A.(1995), *Critical Visions: Policy and Curriculum Rewriting the of Education, Gender and Work*, Corporate Communications Section, DEET, Canberra

2 For a useful overview of school/industry programs in states and territories see Dusseldorp Skills Forum, (1997)

3

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SECTION ONE

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

THE ENTERPRISE APPROACH

JAMES MULRANEY

Salisbury High School, South Australia

Introduction

Salisbury High School was launched as the first enterprise high school in Australia on the 31st of March 1995 by the South Australian Minister for Education and Children's Services, The Hon Rob Lucas MLC. The school has embraced the enterprise focus and direction and enjoys strong support from the local community and regional industry.

The immediate suburbs around the school are a mixture of low-socio-economic families, high density public housing, high technology industries and expanding horticulture/market gardens. The hotel industry has been totally upgraded to provide for cheap food and poker machines with Adelaide's highest, gambling turnover achieved in the local area.

The school has an enrolment of just over 700 students during the day with up to 400 catered for in technology training at night. Half the students come from poverty backgrounds with 27% of students from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are 1.5% of the student population. A special education unit—The Open Door—catering for 30 seriously disabled students who have Negotiated Curriculum Plans. The school has cooperative arrangements with Paralowie R-12 School and Salisbury East High School to deliver a wider range of senior secondary programs. A youth annexe—Paralowie House—has been established to cater for students at risk of leaving school early, with enterprise and labour market programs. It also accommodates young homeless who are, or agree to be, in training or education programs, pilots a Youth Incubator program to encourage young people to go into business and is restoring the gardens to the splendour of last century as part of the City Farm project.

The university entrance rate of students from Northern Adelaide is well below the state average. Articulation processes from school to TAFE have not been explicit and the take up rate of TAFE courses has been low in the past. The assumed lack of success of students in schooling has lead to a puliferration of gloom and doom scenarios where young people have little confidence in the

future and feel alienated from mainstream society. The youth unemployment rate is approximately 40% with some pockets in the region closer to 70%.

It is in this environment a group involved in working with young people produced a publication—*Partnerships and Pathways—the future of young people in northern Adelaide* as we firmly believed we could make a difference.

Regional structure

Partnerships and Pathways suggested the region needed an employment, education and training network—people who work with young people to work together with the regional development board and not in isolation any longer. Thus the Northern Adelaide Regional Employment, Education and Training Network (NAREET as it is affectionately known) was born under the auspices of the Northern Adelaide Development Board (NADB). The Network continues to thrive and has a vibrant Executive group and board with committees on Pathways, Employer—NAREET—partnerships, Marketing, Career Expo, and Training Providers. Business, industry, local government, training providers, Para Institute of TAFE, the University of South Australia, government agencies and schools work together to respond to regional training and labour needs and coordinate information about regional education and training pathways.

An International Conference—*Jobs for Young Australians*—in 1995 focused the energy of the region to support vocational pathways to employment and training for young people.

Salisbury high school context

One of the platforms of the Partnerships and Pathways concept was the enterprise high school which would use enterprise education in a culture change scenario to transform a high school into a more successful organisation. The integration of vocational and general education in an enterprise classroom methodology which produced clearly understood pathways to employment, training and further education was the impetus Salisbury High School was looking for to make a difference for its students and support their move from welfare dependency to creating a future for themselves.

The culture of our school has now changed to better match the needs of local students with those of regional industry. Our students still receive a balanced education and are encouraged to become good citizens. Our programs now also stimulate students to put their own ideas into practice, make real decisions, assess risk and accept responsibility for achieving their own successes.

The school has become an Enterprise Education Centre rather than just a conventional high school. The school opens 49 weeks of the year from 7.30 am to 9.30 pm, and we are now a community school with programs for all age groups. Curriculum leaders and their autonomous teams are encouraged to seek support and funding from the community and business as well as from government agencies.

Salisbury High School's daily structure is three 100 minute lessons with two 10 minutes pastoral care sessions. Since 1994 the school's pathway committee has been investigating how to best utilise this structure to produce a vibrant Senior School Program. Currently the Pathway Program at Salisbury High School includes the following aspects:

Training in Retail and Commerce (TRAC)

Ten schools contribute 0.1 salary to create a program coordinator salary. Each school is able to access 10 students into pathway programs in Retail, Hospitality and Automotive. Students spend a considerable time on-the-job training in workplaces with off-the-job training provided by the program coordinator through a Work Education curriculum. Generally students spend one day a week in TRAC with individual school timetables of students adjusted to suit individual needs.

Building and Construction

Seven schools contribute 0.1 salary, with support from Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) to create a program coordinator salary. The program is delivered at the Netley Skills Training Centre, the Master Builders Association training facility. Construction Worker Modules are embedded in SACE Work Education and Technology curriculum. Generally students spend one day a week at Netley (7.30 am starts) with individual school timetables adjusted to suit individual needs.

Automotive Project

General Motors Holden at Elizabeth combine with seven regional schools to deliver Modules from the Vehicle Industry Certificate. A combination of in-school delivery of national communication modules and vocational mathematics modules is compiled with structured workplace learning on the shop floor at Holden's. Schools contribute a 0.1 salary with support from ASTF and Holden's to ensure the success of the project. Already some successful graduates are moving into employment.

Horticulture Pathway Program

Salisbury High School is coordinating this regional project for seven schools involving up to 110 students by the second semester in 1997. The ASTF is supporting a project coordinator to articulate the curriculum from Amenity

Horticulture into South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) program in schools, to develop a data bank for workplacement, to develop a program log book and negotiate a Memorandum of Agreement with Murray Institute of TAFE. The project is school based with training and development support for school personnel. Work placements are being coordinated through industry representation on the Management team and require students to complete Occupational Health and Safety and First Aid before placements are arranged. The program is also focussing on students at risk and students with special needs.

Sport and Recreation

In this example, Salisbury High School has begun the program in year 12, (while in others it is participating in building 2-3 years programs from Year 11). The sport and recreation modules are included in Year 12 Physical Education programs with industry recognition through Sport SA and TAFE accreditation through Regency Park Institute.

Hospitality

The training recognition in hospitality stays with the teacher not the school, consequently it is important to have a strategy of training all staff as after ten years or through promotion the school may lose its investment and have to start again. Ten core modules are able to be delivered over a two year period. Our partnership with Adelaide Hilton International certainly makes work placements an attraction.

Information Technology.

Through the NADB a regional co-operative approach to information technology is emerging. A pilot program in Certificate 3 and 4 information technology is being implemented with Northern Adelaide Skills Training Centre, Para Institute of TAFE, Salisbury High School and Para West Re-entry Campus working together to deliver training to 60 young people by December 1997.

National Office Skills

In the 1970's and 1980's business schools were successful in training young people for secretarial and reception work. The information age has radically changed this landscape and we are now rebuilding our business school concept into a modern information 'technology' literate project. A range of modules are offered and delivered within traditional business education subjects.

Electronics Pathway Program

The South Australian coordinator of the Electronics Pathway Program is based at Salisbury High School. He is working with a number of schools across South Australia to combine studies in mathematics, science and technology with

modules accredited to support students into an electronic pathway to employment and training.

National Communication Modules

Entry level training has a range of generic modules which cut across vocational pathways. At Salisbury High School we are currently concentrating on communication and job ready-type modules to supplement our enterprise focus and support students to achieve 'connecting' modules thus ensuring a range of pathways are open to them.

But what is on the drawing board?

The policy at Salisbury High School which drives our push into vocational education and training is to have every Curriculum Area involved with a pathway connected to their area. Consequently our Pathway Committee has cross curriculum representation and a strong commitment to improve teachers' knowledge basis and to identify teachers who want to be involved. The following initiatives are in the planning stages.

The Arts Pathway

An Events Management curriculum is to be piloted in the performing and visual arts to teach young people to organise, manage and deliver arts events in the school/region.

Viticulture

An extension of the City Farm Project is to work with regional wine makers to establish a training vineyard in the school grounds with appropriate industry and TAFE recognition and training.

Information Technology

Salisbury High School plans to introduce the Certificate 3 Information Technology (300 hours) into Year 11 and 12 Technology in 1998. We are also supporting a regional push to extend the program to other regional high schools as part of a coordinated effort to skill young people in information technology to access the training and employment opportunities of the IT & T industries in our region.

Retail Certificate

One of the major employers of young people is the retail industry and we have begun discussions with key industry personnel to plan a program.

Certificate in Cooking

The cafe business is expanding in central Adelaide and into surrounding suburbs and regional centres. A shortage of trained staff has been identified by the

industry and preliminary discussions to develop a pilot program are well advanced. Salisbury High School has nominated to be a pilot school to complement our hospitality training.

Child Studies

Child Studies is a popular choice in most years from the Health and Personal Development curriculum. A structured workplacement program is being planned to supplement the school program.

Small Business/Enterprise

Currently the Salisbury High School annexe at Paralowie House has funding to support ten local young 'people' business with local hoteliers acting as mentors. We are investigating how to incorporate recognised small business modules into the training programs. For example, an Internet Cafe training program is being matched to Information Technology, Hospitality/Cooking and Small Business Management.

Fashion and Design

Salisbury High School is a recognised national leader in Fashion CAD. The next step in the evolution of our program is to consolidate engineering modules within the curriculum to provide a variety of options into employment and training which includes, but is not exclusive to the fashion industry. CAD is adaptable to engineering modules.

As you can gather Salisbury High School is a busy enterprise itself, always looking for new opportunities to involve students. In 1994 our graduates achieved a 54% success rate into employment, training, further education or returning to school. The 1995 graduates achieved a 99% success rate. The 1996 graduates with support from the Jobs Pathway Program, our own Student Employment Service and their own creative talents is once again very close to 100% success rate. The media profile we generate from the school also results in employers seeking our graduates.

The passport to work

During the early 1990's Salisbury High School and Paralowie R-12 school developed a Year 7 Personal Portfolio as a Passport to high school. Students produced a profile of themselves, what their interests were and in what areas they believed they received recognition at school. Also included was a representation of their general curriculum work to give their Year 8 teachers a guide to what they were capable of and a starting point for extension work.

The 1995/96 National Industry Education Forum Portfolio and Key Competencies Project provided Salisbury High School with an opportunity to

reflect on how to use passports or portfolios to promote our students and teach them the language of the workplace. As a result we now have the following processes in place.

Year 7—8 Personal Portfolio
The Passport to High School

Year 8—9 Skills Register
Students begin to relate their school work to the Key Competencies, keep a valued piece of work from each Curriculum Area and collate all certificates and awards to date.

Year 10 Enterprise Portfolio
The Skills Register is extended to include a resume, an understanding of how school and non-school work/interests relate to the Key Competencies, a valued piece of curriculum work and certificate and other awards that employers of part-time workers would find interesting.

Year 12 Work Passport
Student credentials for entry into work or training are contained within the Work Passport. It includes a resume, application for employment, summary of skills related to key competencies, personal statements, school references, certificates and awards to increase the profile of the student.

While this process is labour intensive the important component to point out is it is student generated and written with support from care teachers and Health and Personal Development staff in particular. Once again we are investigating options to include the process in SACE accreditation and VET modules.

Pastoral Care

The success of our students is directly related to our Case Management or Pastoral Care program. Teachers are encouraged to develop their student/teacher/parent relationship. The school devotes the equivalent of a subject in time to Care each week with teachers acting as educational brokers for the 12—15 students who are in their care for up to six years. Career counselling, pathway information, student success, student behaviour management and welfare are all a part of the management process. Autonomous year level teams of 6—8 teachers design the programs and monitor their implementation and success'.

Conclusion

The enterprise approach is a snapshot of vocational pathways and enterprise developments at Salisbury High School. We mix this with a healthy dose of futures methodology and structured thinking sessions. Our challenge is to prepare young people to be **resilient** to job and other life changes, to recognise opportunities and to make the most of them. We need young Australians who can think for themselves and are not daunted by the challenge of change.

VET Programs at James Harrison College

JOHN BROMILOW

James Harrison Secondary College, Victoria

Background

James Harrison Secondary College is an ex-technical school which had over 1000 students enrolled in 1988 and has approximately 450 at present. The school became involved in vocational education by default in 1993 with Alcoa.

Peter Gilbert, a consultant with GOTEC, the innovative entrepreneurial branch of the Gordon TAFE, had worked in industry, secondary schools and TAFE. He had the vision that all three sectors could work together in partnership.

Peter approached Bob McLeod, Technical Training Supervisor at Alcoa and put his idea to Bob to develop a Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) program that incorporated learning outcomes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) modules. After leaving the meeting Bob decided to drop in unannounced to James Harrison Secondary College, to determine if there was any interest in such an idea. He spoke with Barry Sutton, the principal with whom he had previously worked at South Barwon Secondary College. They agreed to give it a go.

My involvement eventuated when I happened to be in the wrong spot at the right time. That night, after McLeod had returned with several modules, I began the second steepest learning curve I have ever known. It was a new language—the comfort zone had been shattered.

Initially a small team was selected to look at integrating learning outcomes of Broad Based Engineering modules into VCE. Dual Recognition did not exist in 1993.

Over the following days, seven other teachers were approached to see if they would accept the challenge of trying to link learning outcomes with work requirements and assessment tasks. Each one was in their own way, a risk taker, willing to challenge bureaucracy. The challenge had been issued—no rewards were promised because funding was not available.

Over the next six weeks this group met with the trainers at Alcoa and a 'bush ranger' from the Gordon Institute of TAFE Geoff Wootton. Geoff was also a lateral thinker who could see the merit in the idea that 'giving a bit often yields a great deal', that is, give a bit at the bottom to attract more later on. Geoff has played a major role in the program as the co-ordinator of the pilot. This was August 1993.

The Model did not require VCE plus TAFE modules to be taught. We did emphasise an integrated approach. The program enhanced both areas of learning by raising the standards of both the use of Information Technology and Materials Metals and Mechanical components.

Even from the early days funding has never been an issue. We submitted using the timeline of DEET proposals in July/September, and November, with Alcoa to advertise in November. Trainees were to begin in January, DEET approval to be given in February and DSE approval in March. We were going to do it and we took risks.

We found that industry was willing to support programs that provided it with positive outcomes. The result was a three way partnership in which each partner had equal status. The nationally-acclaimed Alcoa Engineering and Science Traineeship was born. We had succeeded in developing a school/ industry/ provider partnership.

How it operates

Alcoa selects and employs trainees and elects to send them to James Harrison Secondary College in order to obtain an uncompromised VCE, an enhanced Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER), a Nationally accredited TAFE certificate, participation in a Traineeship program and an edge in the employment market.

This partnership was industry-led, promoted effective pathways into employment or further education and training, had multiple entry and exit points, had developed effective partnerships between participants and employers, had clearly identified outcomes for work places and industry, contained nationally transferable outcomes, could be easily replicated or transferred to other locations and industry types and was self-sustainable.

If these points were to be true, then we had to be flexible, innovative and able to compromise whilst delivering a quality program in another business sector. The program was duplicated in the Business Management sector. Here two schools, two providers and six industry partners were used. The program began in July. The model had remained, the partners had increased. Flexibility had been created.

Since this time, the model has been expanded into other industry sectors including Automotive, Hospitality, Small Business, Engineering, Retail, Office Administration and Building. Gradually, it has expanded to encompass the majority of staff working in all learning areas. Vocational Education and Training is now a school charter priority.

Program features

Co-ordination

The management team of the program consists of two representatives from each of the three partners (school, industry, TAFE). At the school level, the programs are co-ordinated by two people working as a team. Strength comes from not having a one-person show.

Co-operation

Each partner is willing to give total co-operation to any other. We are flexible and operate on the premise that the program is delivered on the site that produces the best result for the trainee.

Maximum outcomes for all

Students who participate in the program gain maximum outcomes for their efforts. The schools pathways approach allows other students who are not trainees to obtain many of the benefits of the program through credit transfer. The university pathway via the Dual Recognition process is kept open. Students initially not considering university are doing so now. Of the trainee group of fifteen students, eight accepted or deferred university positions; four took up TAFE positions; whilst the remainder gained employment.

Benefits

National Lighthouse Program

James Harrison Secondary College has been dubbed a 'borderless school' due to its ability to develop complex networks, relationships and alliances so as to provide services which are appropriate to different customer needs. Our basic philosophy is to ask industry what its needs are and to not to tell industry that our 'whiz bang' program is its saviour.

Teaching Staff

For teaching staff the program has improved the quality of teaching being delivered, has given staff opportunities to work with students who are focussed

and see the VCE as relevant. The program has reduced discipline problems to almost zero.

TAFE

More students are attracted to TAFE courses after finishing VCE. In addition, TAFE staff have enhanced job satisfaction because of delivering more challenging units.

Continual National Exposure

Exposure has come in the form of evaluations, interviews and analysis, in addition to involvement in other university projects, Catholic Education, speaking engagements, publications and case study. However, such commitments and rapid expansion does have its associated problems including keeping staff up to date and keeping up with the changing location of the goal posts. The high profile has to be balanced by the needs of students.

Concluding points

- Geelong has the potential to be a leader in vocational education. It is strategically situated so as to be significantly isolated whilst being in a position to develop co-ordinated programs with the district.
- Geelong institutions of education must see students as being beyond a funding source. At present every VCE student is seen as being worth $5000 in a school's global budget. The thinking of the 'powers that be' needs to be changed to allow all students the opportunity to achieve the education that they deserve.
- With co-operation, Geelong schools can develop a network that can cater for the needs of all their clients, ie. students and industry. The needs of our clients are paramount. If a school focuses on delivering a curriculum that focuses on university placements, 70% of its clients will be disadvantaged. James Harrison Secondary College has recently developed a program for students who struggle with a standard VCE.
- Industry will support programs that give it positive outcomes. We strongly believe in this philosophy and in 1996 we embarked on an ambitious campaign with BAYTEC Enterprises training and BAY FM to position 100 trainees with industry before Christmas. Although this campaign was ambitious, we were attempting to break the myth that 'Geelong is a nice place to live but not a good place to do business.'
- Industry does not like being told what it needs. As previously mentioned, industry will support programs that it benefits from. Industry will also

support the youth of its community. We are presently in a position to establish ongoing training programs that satisfy these needs whilst supporting the community. Training institutions need to bite the bullet and put community needs ahead of funding goals if this is to be achieved. The government 'milking bucket' cannot exist forever.

- If the final product is good enough, it will support itself. To work with the people of Geelong, for Geelong and to ensure that Geelong is not left behind in the national reform agenda will ensure that our youth will prosper. It is up to us to take the necessary risks to ensure that Geelong is able to supply a sustainable workforce capable of dealing with any future challenge.

'Great Organisations Dream Great Dreams'

David Gallagher

Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council (GRVEC), Corio Community College, Victoria

Spirit of Co-operation

The Geelong area has always had a history of co-operation and co-ordination in the areas of work experience and industry links. These early tentative links with industry and the spirit of co-operation between all players have nurtured the growth of the Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council (GRVEC). Today GRVEC is a driving force in vocational education in Geelong and the surrounding country areas. It has an executive officer, four work placement field officers, office and administration support, access to a marketing and public relations department and the support of all players in the area of vocational education. The organisation is responsible for delivering vocational education to over four hundred and eighty students in eleven different areas. This represents over 71,300 hours of on-the-job training and 191,303 hours off-the-job training.

Representation at the senior level

GRVEC has representation at a senior level from the Gordon Institute of TAFE, the Geelong Region Group Training Company, the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Trades Hall Council, Catholic Education, Independent School Representation, the Department of Education, the City of Greater Geelong and Deakin University. The council is responsible for administration and marketing, planning and maintenance, work placement, liaison with secondary colleges, initiatives and developments and achieving sustainably beyond 1999. To ensure a strong employer representation the council is establishing industry sub-committees for each of the eleven areas where it is developing and delivering vocational education and training. These committees have representation from employer, education and work placement field officers. The aims and missions statement of GRVEC are include[1]

Delivering vocational education

The areas where GRVEC is delivering vocational education are in hospitality both back and front-of-house, automotive, engineering, electronics, office administration, retail, agriculture, information technology, small business management and, new for 1997, child care (Certificate Three in Children Services Early Childhood Care). The area of child care is under dual accreditation because there is not a formally accredited dual recognition program in child care. During 1997 GRVEC will continue to develop, with the Ford Motor Company, an engineering program that includes the Basic Certificate in Engineering, the first year of a Ford fitting and turning apprenticeship and extensive on-the-job training. Also new for 1997, Ford and GRVEC are working together to develop a program to deliver the VCE and the Vehicle Industry Certificate. In all, GRVEC programs students achieve an uncompromised VCE, a certificate two or three level qualification and, in many cases, the first complete year of an apprenticeship (engineering, hospitality), or over 75% of a first year apprenticeship. All on-the-job training is supervised by the Geelong Region Group Training Company, which is the largest employer of apprentices and trainees in Geelong. At present the Group Training Company has 210 apprentices and trainees.

There is no shortage of challenges

In the area of vocational education there is no shortage of challenges and GRVEC is no exception to the rule. The biggest challenge is to achieve full sustainability by the end of 1999 when the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) comes to an end. GRVEC is very grateful for the support and faith shown by the ASTF and it takes its commitment to be fully self-sufficient by 1999 very seriously. In the GRVEC business plan for 1997-1999 there are contributions from all players in vocational education: Employers, because there are substantial savings in both training and recruitment to be made by being involved with supervised work placement; Students, because they are one of the real winners in vocational education; Education (both secondary and TAFE) because they are responsive to meeting the needs of students to prepare them for work.

GRVEC is also responsible for delivering vocational education in the country areas of Western Victoria. The tyranny of distance is a cruel fact of life for VET in the country. One of our students in the retail program has travelled 13,756 kilometres to attend the first year of the retail program. She has not missed one day for the entire year. To overcome the distance factor, GRVEC is developing video conferencing facilities, block release programs in the holidays for study

and work placement, an off campus modular approach and supported travel for students to attend the Gordon Technical College. The training of workplace assessors is an area which will receive a higher priority in 1997. Up until 1997, there has been no executive officer for GRVEC and all work has been undertaken by dedicated members of the committee on top of their normal duties. This changes in 1997 when GRVEC will finally have not only the enthusiasm and commitment but also the legs and the wherewithal to achieve its dreams.

'Great organisations dream great dreams'

Some of the highlights and successes of GRVEC are its excellent programs, one example being the Myer program. Myer selects the students and over the two years of the retail program, the students are exposed to every aspect of retailing for example, logistics, sales, visual merchandising, office and store security. The students undertake Myer's own in-house training, attend relevant product information nights and apart from the 240 hours per year of work placement, they are employed as casuals on award wages. Myer has also indicated that it wishes to continue to be involved with the program in the future. In the words of Mr Les Sullivan, Business Leader, "These students will be our best trained staff because they have extensive training and experience in all areas of retail." Another highlight is the commitment from all key players. This has been backed up with significant contributions in cash and kind to support the operations of GRVEC and to help it achieve sustainability by 1999. Many of our programs deliver more than the dual recognition qualification. In hospitality, students receive an additional 60 hours to bring them to the equivalent of a first year apprenticeship. The Ford program delivers an additional 60 hours per year to give the students a first year Ford apprenticeship in fitting and turning. But our biggest highlight is the acceptance of the program by employers. Increasingly more and more employers are using the vocational education program as a means of training and recruiting new employees. After all, they train the students to their standards and have the opportunity to observe the students for two years before they make their final selection(s) for employment. As one employer remarked, "We select students in October for apprenticeships and I swear that they are not the same students when we see them again in January." The enthusiasm and drive of the GRVEC executive is also an highlight. This organisation dreams great dreams and will continue to be a driving force in vocational education in Geelong well into the next century.

Notes

1 GEELONG REGIONAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATIONAL COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT—AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1 NAME

The group named Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council.

2 MEMBERSHIP

2.1 The membership of the Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council includes:
Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Gordon Institute of TAFE
Geelong Region Group Training
Deakin U university
Australian Chamber of Manufacturers
ACTU/Trades Hall Council
City of Greater Geelong
Directorate of School Education - two representatives
Catholic Schools
Independent Schools

3 MISSION

3.1 The Geelong Regional Vocation Education Council is peak organisation that has as it's "mission statement":

To provide quality vocational education programs to students.

4 AIMS

The Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council is a peak organisation that aims to:

4.1 Provide increased options for post compulsory students which will enhance their employment and further education and training opportunities.

4.2 Develop and implement industry validated programs through co-operative partnerships between education and industry.

4.3 Offer formally accredited curriculum through flexible delivery strategies, and develop and implement organisational and administrative structures which facilitate these programs.

4.4 Develop clusters which pool resources and programs.

4.5 Develop a marketing and public relations plan to keep all stakeholders aware of developments and opportunities.

5 OPERATION

5.1 The Geelong Vocational Education Council focus is on developing and communicating its "mission statement" top guide local action.

5.2 The Geelong Vocational Education Council maintains and communicates the "big picture" or context for vocational education in the Geelong region.

5.3 The Geelong Vocational; Education Council makes decisions in consultation with groups which affect the region.

5.4 The Geelong Vocational Education Council ensures that communication is effectively managed between groups.

5.5 The Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council may co-opt members with interest/expertise as required to accomplish specific goals.

6 CLUSTERS

6.1 The "clusters" are encouraged to be outcome focused (i.e not committees).

6.2 The "clusters" are encouraged to develop around:
projects
industry focuses
geographical areas
interest areas
institutions
other

6.3 The membership of "clusters" is flexible, and they are fluid and realign/disband as projects shift/complete.

6.4 "Clusters" are autonomous but collaborate with other "clusters".

6.5 "Clusters are represented at the Geelong Regional Vocational Education Council through the education representatives, and other members of the Council.

AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF MENTORING ON UNEMPLOYMENT

BARBARA HAMMOND

Deakin University, Victoria

The Buckland Foundation has funded Deakin University, Deakin Human Services Australia to run a small pilot project for two years in Geelong to test the value of providing mentoring arrangements between those in the workforce and unemployed people, with a view to assisting them to obtain employment. The "Business Mentoring Project" was established in May 1996 and will run to the end of 1997.

Whilst there is a range of general research documenting the benefits of mentoring those already *employed* in the workplace there has been little research on the benefits of matching *unemployed* people with voluntary mentors who are in employment.

This pilot project provides an ideal opportunity to rigorously evaluate the value of such an approach in a regional community such as Geelong, in the State of Victoria, Australia.

The primary objective will be to evaluate the Business Mentoring Project as a new form of labour market intervention and assess its value to unemployed people, mentors and businesses.

Goals of the business mentoring project

The research will evaluate the degree to which the following three formal goals of the Business Mentoring Project have been met:

1 To assist the progression of job-seekers to sustainable employment.

2 To provide the opportunity for businesses in Geelong to contribute positively to addressing the issue of unemployment through participation in the project.

3 To provide the opportunity for mentors to gain new skills and contribute positively to addressing the issue of unemployment in Geelong.

Research approach

As the project to be evaluated is evolving a new model of practice, the research design adopted is that of illuminative evaluation. Within this paradigm there is a leaning towards participatory and action collaborative based evaluation.

The relationship between the researcher and the Project is played out in a sort of "Tango dance" with the research including elements within its questionnaire design which are intended to deliberately encourage mentors to better adopt some of the strategies underpinning the project's goals. In turn, the pilot and 'unknown quality' of this very experimental form of labour market intervention, and the voluntary nature of its participants informs and challenges the research plan. The researcher has to flexibly adapt the timing and methods of data collection in the attempt to both track resultant behaviour changes of the cohort and capture the true meaning of the experience of mentoring partnerships for the participants.

The research methodology thus uses a qualitative case study approach involving individual group interviews, surveys, questionnaires and or audio taped sessions. This is supplemented by more generic material gathered as part of the normal service documentation required in the running of the project.

The research cohort includes the Business Mentoring Project team and Advisory Committee, businesses promoting mentoring, and mentors and job-seekers involved in the project. Job-seekers need to be over 18 in receipt of benefits and unemployed for between six and twelve months.

Mentors and job-seekers will be surveyed at three points during their participation in the project at intake, at 3-4 months and at exit. A sample of successful and unsuccessful jobseekers and their partners will be studied and there will be an attempt to follow ten partnerships more closely throughout the study and examine these in more depth.

The project

Three staff are employed in the Business Mentoring Project to recruit, train and match up to 150 jobseekers with voluntary mentors drawn from businesses in Geelong.

Mentors are recruited sequentially, in small groups and offered three hours' training in basic communication skills, understanding of unemployment and effective ways of relating to jobseekers. There is a focus on the expectations involved in taking on the role of a mentor such as; the ability to provide support and motivation to the job seeker; acting as a role model and providing information about networks and strategies for successful networking.

These are the generic 'qualities of a mentor' commonly reported in most mentoring programs. However in addition to this, the project has overlayed the

concept of Case Management and more particularly Employment-related Case Management as a way of deliberately encouraging mentors to focus on the *progression* of job-seekers towards sustainable employment.

Employment-related Case Management emerged as a form of labour market intervention in Australia in 1994 (following *Working Nation* 1994) and will be sustained by the present government as the basis of intensive employment assistance for long term unemployed people (twelve months unemployed/at risk of long term unemployment and not job ready) as it implements the fully competitive 'employment placement market' in late 1997.

Employment-related Case Management offers a guidance-based model which uses the construct of 'job readiness' as a way of categorising clients and offers a stepped model which can be applied flexibly to any client (Hammond 1994). It encompasses an ordered package, or suite, of career guidance skills, attitudes and approaches which are most likely to assist jobseekers to progress towards employment. Mentors are encouraged to recognise and take structured logical steps with their job-seekers which move them through the stage of intake, (meeting with their partner, developing rapport and trust); preparation for work (identifying work strengths and barriers, exploring occupations, setting goals, determining training needs), attainment of work (having a clear plan of action and up-to-date resume, good networking and interview presentation skills) and sustaining of work (resolving initial difficulties and maintaining motivation).

The initial training for mentors explains and emphasises this approach and addresses the skill needs of mentors to deliver this sort of assistance (e.g. examples of good resumes, methods for giving feedback on mock job interviews etc.) Early in their partnership, mentors then ask their jobseekers to fill in a survey which explicitly addresses the degree to which the job seeker wants each of these types of assistance from their mentor.

This instrument not only assists the partners to relate in a structured manner but also provides a base line for then measuring throughout the project the degree of *progress* that jobseekers have made in their move towards employment as a result of the mentoring partnership. This emphasis on progress distinguishes this from of labour market intervention form many others which characteristically have defined outcomes for job seeker more narrowly and concretely as education/ training, paid employment or more recently 'amount of time off benefits'.

Another key distinguishing feature of this project is the voluntary nature of the partnership for both parties.

Outcomes of the research

This is a highly experimental program and it is not at all clear what the outcomes will be. The challenge of the research design will be to be able to clearly indicate the type and value of inputs to the program and find effective means of measuring outcomes in such a way that they can form the basis of policy decisions and directions in the future.

If the project model proves successful it is anticipated that the results of this evaluation will be disseminated to appropriate government and non-government agencies and business organisations to promote the value of this approach as an effective labour market intervention. The research will also be of interest to those exploring the following fields: mentoring; labour market programs; social work and career counselling theory and practice; and social/community partnerships.

It is hoped that elements of good mentoring practice (once and if identified) will be transferable to other settings. For example, in the state secondary schools sector there has been a pattern of continual reduction in the amount of careers advice and assistance available. A well supported and carefully targeted mentoring program calling on parents or other volunteers in the community, may provide a cost effective means of enabling students to broaden their options in a tight labour market situation. Continuity between school and post school transition to adulthood/work status could be better effected.

A similar augmentory approach could be adopted by other community based structures whose ambit may be to fund/provide a narrower base of assistance to their clients (e.g. agencies dealing with financial aid, homelessness, youth, offenders, health issues etc.) but who can see the related benefit of employment related mentoring impacting positively on the holistic needs of their clients regardless of age.

A final point can be made in relation to two issues; firstly the influence of the more marginal attachment to the labour market that has in the last five years become the characteristic of so many more professions and secondly, the impact of this project and research more generally. In this case both the project staff and the researcher are on short term contracts and mindful of the need to not only complete the research but do it in such a way that there are marketable products for the project and the researcher at its end (e.g. not just reports and papers but training packages, consultancies etc.) To what degree will the nature, and type of priorities and the so called "purity" of university research change as this influence becomes more widespread?

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SECTION TWO

PATHWAY REFLECTIONS

ISSUES CONFRONTING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN VICTORIA IN THE LATE 1990S[1]

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Introduction

Significant changes in global, national and local economies have had a major impact on the worlds of work and education (Kenway *et al,* 1993). Indeed, the early to mid-nineties, can justifiably be said to represent 'new times' in education (Kenway *et al*, 1994) and work (Watkins 1994) as both sets of systems and work-places are restructured and more closely integrated (Kenway 1994). Employment, unemployment and training now preoccupy the deliberations of policy makers in education as well as those in employment, training and youth affairs. As a result, the past decade has seen intense pressures for change in vocational preparation in schools.

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 (for a full discussion of these changes see Kenway & Willis with Junor 1995). As indicated in the introduction to this book, state and Commonwealth educational policy encourages or requires schools to 'change the mix of general and vocational education in order to strengthen the vocational, to provide greater clarity about the pathways between school education and a range of post-school destinations, and to help ensure that these pathways actually lead somewhere by enabling students to gain credentials acceptable in workplaces and training'. Hence we now see an increasing articulation of post-compulsory schooling, structured training (through Technical and Further Education and/or private provider programs) 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, enterprise curriculum and programs and the

recent New Apprenticeship System, through which young people will be more readily able to undertake apprenticeships, traineeships or specific vocational courses as part of their school program.

As we indicated in the Introduction to this book, under the Commonwealth Labor Government (1983-1996) a series of reports associated with the National Training Reform Agenda suggested the development of more flexible pathways between education, training and employment. These sought 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 (Australian Education Council 1991, Employment and Skills Formation Council 1992).

As noted, this approach has been revised under the recent Liberal/National Party government which has developed the New Apprenticeship System. The school will be a central link in the initiative[2]. It is hoped 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 stresses that:

> Vocational education and training will be expanded in schools. Programs 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 1996, pp. 9-10).

State governments are still considering their responses to this latest change in vocational education. Meanwhile it is pertinent to note that they have responded somewhat differently to the general imperatives introduced under the Commonwealth Labor government. Nonetheless, their responses have typically included Dual Accreditation and Dual Recognition programs, Credit Transfer and Enterprise Education and, often Case Management. A broad aim of our research project is to explore how schools are responding to these many shifts.

As our research in capital cities, provincial cities and rural and remote areas shows, there have been various responses by differently located schools. Some have virtually ignored the vocational imperative. Some have added programs for small numbers of students while others have adopted a whole school approach to,

say, enterprise education. In some schools vocational education is defined narrowly, in others it includes the 'hand, the head and the heart'. In some cases schools have developed 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. Some schools are looking to become accredited private providers of training for non-school populations. Some have also been very successful in attracting additional grants.

As these programs develop, a number of new educational issues arise. It is important that we monitor these and consider seriously their implications. What follows are some of the issues which arose in our research schools located in Victoria.

Preliminary findings: Some emerging issues

School/Employer Issues

The standing of competencies in the school and industry

Undoubtedly a significant influencing factor in the changes to vocational education programs since 1993 has been the development of employment-related Key Competencies. Stemming from the Finn Committee recommendations, the Mayer Committee Report 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, together with principles to provide for nationally-consistent assessment and reporting of achievement of the Key Competencies (Mayer 1992).

The standing of Competencies varied across the cameo schools[3] 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. The process is described by this vocational education co-ordinator:

> I go with the employer or the workshop manager or whoever I am talking to who's taking responsibility for the student. We go through all of the information and we say okay, as far as collecting, analysing and organising information, select the right information from a number of alternatives which could be workshop manuals, it could be special charts on the wall or stuff like that. Do they know where to go and how to look it

> up and do they understand the importance of the information? [the employer] has got to give them some sort of assessment from excellent to fair. So the employer has [a checklist] and they work through the seven competencies and give us a grading...

One school approached assessment entirely on the basis of Key Competencies where no graded marks such as 'A' or 'B' etc were given in any subject area. Another was moving closer to the inclusion of Key Competencies across the curriculum at a deeper level.

It is not clear at this stage of our research the extent to which TAFE and employers work with the competencies or whether they are working towards the specific Carmichael Competencies or Mayer Competencies. This is an issue to be pursued in our research during 1997 and 1998.

Marketing of schools

In certain 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 schools below a certain number may be targeted for closure. Given the problems associated with youth and employment, those schools which can develop programs which in the end deliver jobs feel that they will be very well placed to attract 'clients'. In contrast other less well networked and positioned schools struggle to deploy staff, mount programs and make cross sectoral connections. When asked if vocational education programs are something the school could use as a 'marketing tool', this curriculum co-ordinator commented:

> Yes, it would be if it could be worked better than the way in which it seems to be able to be worked at the moment. There's a lot of problems for us with it and we haven't been able to see our way as to how it could possibly work.

Nonetheless this market orientation has benefits then but also problems which we discuss further under schools/students issues. Suffice it to say here that in some instances this competitive environment has meant that schools feel forced to withhold information from other schools about their programs, feel the need to be the first to put their hand up, individually rather than collaboratively, for funds, feel the need to keep up the image of the program rather than to critically reflect on it so as to improve it, seek to undermine others' programs. It was certainly the case that some schools felt subordinate in the relationships with outside bodies and did not feel able to frankly discuss some contentious issues.

Community service or recruitment vehicle?

A number of employers, particularly in country and regional areas, saw involvement in work-placement[4] programs through the local school as a community duty. With few opportunities for employment in these areas, employers were often glad to help the school and provide some training for students. As some employers were former students of the schools who had remained in the area, they felt a duty to help out and put something back in to the community.

For some employers, involvement in student work-placements was seen as a recruitment vehicle through which potential employees could be screened with little financial outlay. While this "try before you buy" approach was being adopted by some employers, indeed, many schools promote their work-placement program in this very way to industry to ensure both parties are seen to be benefiting from the program.

Award rates vs $5 per day

The payment of students on work-placement varied across the cameo schools. Some work-placement employers pay students the award 'work experience' rate of $5 per day while others may pay over $100 per day depending on the particular arrangement made.

There were conflicting thoughts about this issue with some students claiming they were "slave" or "cheap" labour; while others saw their involvement in work-placement simply as part of their school studies. Their reasoning for accepting the $5 rate being that they do not get paid for work completed in other subjects, so they did not feel they should be paid for their involvement in a dual recognition program. Ideally, a number of students commented that they would like to be paid more than the award $5 but explained they felt the deal was equitable in terms of what they were gaining from their involvement in the program (e.g. experience, skills, confidence, references, networks, possibility of gaining employment etc).

A number of students who were receiving well above the award work experience rate commented that they would not have become involved in the vocational education program if it only paid $5 claiming "it's not worth it for the extra time and effort you put in."

This problem is by no means unique to the cameo schools in this study, nor, indeed, is it unique to Australia. A Northern Ireland research study found work-placement students being paid extremely low rates and reported, "Many also complain of being exploited by their employers..." Frequently they protest at being treated as "slave labour" (McMahon & Quinn 1995 p. 15). In such instances it is clear employers are putting short-term organisation needs ahead of their strategic recruitment and retention needs.

At present there are not clear guidelines specifically related to payment of students on work-placement. As a result, many schools and employers adopt the award work experience rate. Clearly there is an urgent need for more formal and equitable payment arrangements to avoid the possible exploitation of students on work-placements.

Offer of employment before completing VCE

Students being offered employment at their work-placement site before completing their VCE posed a problem for some schools. Some felt so strongly about retaining students until the end of Year 12 that they have worked this into part of their agreement with industry. The Department of Education actively endorses this approach and fully encourages schools to retain students until the end of Year 12.

Other schools, particularly in country or areas with low employment prospects, felt they were not in a position to advise a student on whether they should or should not accept an offer of employment given the unlikelihood that a similar position would be available at the end of Year 12. As commented by this VCE co-ordinator:

> It really isn't up to us to decide that sort of thing...I mean that is a family decision. Now there is nothing to say, I will say to you as VCE co-ordinator, yes you must stay for Year 12. Can I guarantee that there will be anything for you when you finish Year 12?...if the career structure is there, we can't afford to be encouraging our kids not to [take the opportunity of employment]. That's very selfish.

One rural school judged the success of their vocational program on whether students were able to secure employment at the end of Year 11. However this in itself evokes a number of problems:

> The careers co-ordinator always says she would consider Vocational. Education to be totally successful at the end of every year if her students all got jobs. So on that one hand that would be successful, however what does that do to the reality of offering it again in Year 12?

The majority of students commented that if they were offered a job by their work-placement employer they would decline and wait until they had completed their VCE and also gained, for example, their dual recognition certificate. However, a small number of other students who were dissatisfied with their

school experience and did not wish to pursue higher studies commented that if offered a job they would take it despite not having completed their VCE.

School/Labour market issues

Impact of the local labour market on programs implemented

Some schools, particularly in country areas, tried to offer vocational education programs according to the local labour market needs, e.g. hospitality. This was for two reasons: firstly, to ensure students had work-placement sites they could attend during the course of the program, and secondly, to facilitate the students chances of gaining employment in the area. However, many students must move away from the area to find employment in which case the skills learned may no longer be appropriate.

Dwindling work-placement/work experience sites

Country schools in particular have difficulty finding work-placement sites for their students due to limited access to industrial and small businesses in the area. With the additional drain on work sites due to work-placement in Years 11 and 12, some country schools are sending their Year 10 work experience students to Melbourne for two weeks experience in order to reduce the demands on local industry and also to offer the students some wider experiences. This problem will only escalate as demands for work-placements increase due to the introduction of the Industry and Enterprise Studies[5] program in 1997.

Work experience sites are becoming more difficult to secure with the increase in students requiring work-placements to complete their course. Now, with the introduction of Industry and Enterprise Studies in the VCE work-placements will become even more sort after. Some schools, particularly rural schools, are already dividing students in to two groups sending some out in the first half of the year and others in the second half so as not to overload their limited employer resources. Will work experience placements be overlooked by employers? After all, a student on work-placement can offer the employer so much more as they are expected to undertake the tasks of a regular, full-time employee - unlike work experience where often menial tasks are assigned.

School/TAFE Issues

Relationships with TAFE

A number of schools reported strained relationships with TAFE. There were claims that TAFE colleges were unhelpful, unwilling to share curriculum, felt schools were encroaching on what has traditionally been their territory, lacked

guidelines for schools and students and were poorly administered. Fees were a big issue with some schools being charged $1 an hour and others receiving the services free. Schools fear that TAFE providers will inevitably raise their fees making student access to TAFE in the VCE years impossible. For example, some schools reported talk of TAFE institutions charging $1,500 per year. Both schools and students claim they will not be able to participate in such programs if such expensive fees are introduced.

This comment was made by a curriculum co-ordinator:

> Well a lot of it comes down to money. If we wish to use TAFE expertise, we've got to buy it or the students have to buy it. Also if you need specialist facilities you've got to bus the students to [TAFE location] as well as pay to do the particular unit. It becomes an expensive exercise.

Other schools reported that the level of teaching at TAFE was pitched too high for students in some instances. This became so distressing for a group of students at one school that a local TAFE teacher was invited to the school for a Year 11 class to determine the level of teaching and curriculum required for students of this age. The curriculum was later modified to suit the learning levels of students.

Problems were identified with some TAFE institutions in terms of classes being conducted with as few as two school students in them and no TAFE students. Most school students were under the impression they would be attending classes with other TAFE students, not being the sole participants. However, some less confident students found this small group approach beneficial as individual help could be more readily offered by the TAFE teacher.

A number of schools reported that they would prefer to be private providers and bypass the TAFE system wherever possible. However, lack of resources, suitably qualified staff and funding often rules this option out for many schools. For example, a teacher from a rural school commented:

> TAFE could run Dual Recognition a lot easier than a school like this could.

As part of our ongoing research we intend to explore some of these tensions and issues further by visiting TAFE institutions and interviewing relevant people involved in such vocational education programs as Dual Recognition.

Proximity to TAFE

Lack of proximity to a TAFE institution made it difficult for some schools to run programs requiring such links. Again, particularly in country areas, students were

either unable to attend classes during the course of the program due to distance or were required to travel great distances by bus or car. Of course, travel by car often meant inconvenience as a parent or guardian (usually) was needed to transport students to and from the institution. Otherwise, an additional cost could be charged for a bus to transport students, however, for some rural students this could mean up to six hours of travel per day.

As explained by this teacher from a rural school:

> Well if you think that some of the students might spend two hours on the bus in the morning getting to school to start with, two hours getting home and if they've got to go to TAFE in between that, it's another couple of hours. You're talking six hours of travelling before they do any work.

School Issues

Training and qualifications of teaching staff

With the increase in vocational education and dual recognition programs, an important issue is emerging in terms of appropriate teacher training and qualifications. Clearly, teaching in such specialised programs will require specialised training and/or professional development for staff. A concern was raised by a number of schools in terms of who will provide this training and who will pay for it? Many schools are finding that staff qualifications, whilst enough to get by, are not ideally suited to teach these programs. Some schools suggested, and indeed one school had adopted this option, that the best arrangement would be to have staff who have recent experience in the field, or part time teachers who also work in industry e.g. automotive, hospitality.

Some schools are able to gain accreditation to be a private provider of vocational education programs, however as explained by this careers officer:

> ...in automotive we could [gain accreditation to be a private provider] because [staff member's name] has got all of the qualifications and we've got all of the equipment. Hospitality we can't [gain accreditation] because we haven't got the equipment and we haven't got the teacher with the qualifications—virtually no school in Victoria has.

Perhaps the $23.4 million allocated to expand vocational education in Australian secondary schools in relation to the training of teachers in the latest industry standards and techniques will be a step towards overcoming this problem.

Numbers of students and programs on offer

As such programs as those offered through dual recognition are in the early stages of development, some schools reported low numbers of students enrolling in programs. Low student numbers, in turn, make it difficult for schools to implement vocational education programs fully or successfully. For example, some programs may attract as few as four students, perhaps due to small numbers of senior students in the school, which puts a great deal of pressure on the school, staffing and resources. In these times of tremendous cut backs to education, it is difficult for schools to justify staffing for a program of just four students. As mentioned previously, a number of students even commented that they were participating in TAFE classes with as few as two students in them.

Country schools in particular reported that they are only able to offer a minimal number of vocational education programs at one time due to a small student population. To facilitate student numbers in these classes, the school seeks to offer programs in areas which are easy for them to resource.

This comment was made by a teacher from a rural secondary school:

> But our problem is that the size of our student population is 120 kids at VCE compared to 450 odd kids at [another school] and in a dual recognition program that gives you real flexibility to say well there is a solid group of 15-20 kids who want to do a particular hospitality or automotive or sports administration or whatever. We don't have that, we might have 3 or 4 kids who want to do automotive and 3 or 4 who want to do agriculture and so it is very difficult to put in place full programs.

It is recommended, in the first instance at least, that schools only offer one or two programs - particularly with regard to dual recognition. Negotiating, developing and implementing the programs is an extremely demanding and time consuming process. As a result, a consultant explained that it is far too difficult for schools to manage any more than one or two programs in the early stages.

The variety of programs being offered through the cameo schools in this study included traineeships, dual recognition and credit transfer in such areas as office administration, retail, hospitality (front and back of house), engineering, electronics and automotive.

Curriculum issues

The vocational curriculum varies across occupations but it was noticeable that some schools viewed vocational education very narrowly and did not see the importance of helping students to get a better understanding of the changing world of work with regard to the changing nature of the labour market, enterprise

bargaining, the role of technology in work, unions, the gender politics of the workplace etc. The notion of the worker citizen with rights as well as responsibilities was noticeably absent. Given the huge changes in the nature of work this does seem surprising. This was not the case in all schools and some were keen to develop such understandings and to equip students with the knowledge and skills to understand, protect and advance their rights in the workplace.

Attracting and retaining students

One school in particular reported problems attracting and retaining students for the duration of a vocational program. The exact reason for this was unclear, but many students tend to leave during the course of the year whether to go to employment, TAFE or an unspecified destination. As this school was considered 'disadvantaged' and was in an area with low employment prospects, perhaps students saw leaving for immediate employment (which may not necessarily be available at the end of the program) or acceptance into a TAFE course as being a more suitable option.

Offering an alternative vocational education pathway was, for some students, the only thing keeping them at school. For example, one student who was dissatisfied with her school experience at the end of Year 10 commented that she would not have continued her studies if it were not for the introduction of the vocational education program at their school which offered credit transfer and a certificate in office administration in addition to the VCE.

Establishing networks

An additional problem for 'disadvantaged' schools in particular was the difficulty of attracting sponsorship and or work-placements for their students due to the school's 'reputation'. Industry, in many respects, may not wish to have their company name associated with these schools - the very schools that need their support. Where does this leave these schools in times of an increasing push towards competition between schools rather than co-operation? This teacher commented:

> [name of large company] probably can't afford from their image point of view to make [this school] our [name of 'best practice 'school].

'Disadvantaged' schools may also experience the added problem of having difficulty establishing networks with other schools due to their 'reputation'. For example, one school reported difficulties in trying to establish networks and share resources with another secondary college largely due the reputation of the school. Ultimately, this means schools 're-inventing the wheel' leading to

duplication of entire programs and wasteful deployment of time, effort and resources in the development of vocational education pathways - resources that would be better shared through support networks and co-operation. A teacher commented:

> The basic catalyst for change is to look at what other people are doing. If you couldn't have access to other models it would be very difficult just sitting in your own little world.

Two schools in our research study were deemed 'Lighthouse Schools' or 'best practice' schools. However, a number of schools, particularly disadvantaged and country schools reported that this was an ideal they could not aspire to under their certain circumstances. Rather than seeing this as an opportunity to draw on these schools' experiences and adapt them accordingly to suit their own circumstances, many schools saw it as something they could never achieve - particularly without additional funding. One of the 'best practice' schools reported that they had offered their knowledge and experience to assist other schools, however, to date, this offer had not been taken up. As explained by this teacher from a 'disadvantaged' school:

> [name of light house school] program seems pretty over the top. They've done it and they've done it really well. They've made that one connection but that's the problem, there are not another ten [company name] out there for ten other schools to go to. That model is a good model, but they didn't get it going without funding. They've got a huge company with them and they're very industry specific.

The teacher went on to add another example saying:

> The Novotel/Elwood thing—everyone thinks that's fantastic, and it is, but it's not going to happen here, it's just not. You're not going to send them to the [name of local hotel] poker machine kingdom. I mean that's probably where the jobs are but it hasn't got that profile of the Novotel. It looks good and it is good and the whole thing of it just snowballs. But that's not accessible to everyone. The kids are more likely to find a job at the local pub than they are at a 5 star hotel or should we be working with a 5 star hotel to encourage them in that direction?

Student Issues

'Risk'

Some schools appear to provide vocational education programs for their academically 'at risk' students in the hope of offering an alternative pathway to the traditional academic route. However, the majority of schools in this research project recognised that pathways such as dual recognition are indeed quite complex units of study in their own right. Clearly, these types of programs are not necessarily designed for students experiencing difficulty as they demand maturity, keen academic and practical skills, organisation and a great deal of energy.

Another form of 'risk' identified during the study related to student choice. A number of students commented that they had taken quite a risk when they decided to participate in vocational education programs, particularly traineeships where contracts between employers/employees (students) are signed and adhered to for two years. As commented by a female Year 12 student:

> ...it was very scary. It was a big choice and I think it was scary once they put the contracts in our face, they said sign this, this is your training agreement for two years ...

In many instances, students had taken an even bigger risk by changing schools for their VCE years to be involved in programs only offered at certain schools. These students left the comforts and familiarity of a secondary school they had known for four years and their friends, for courses that were, all told, still in their infancy. Quite a decision for a Year 10 student to make. These students were clearly putting a great deal of trust in the school, staff members and industry.

Some students reported that their VCE had been put at 'risk' or compromised by their participation in particular vocational education programs. This 'risk' came in the form of not necessarily being able to do the subjects you want due to timetable constraints, not having as much time as other students to study for exams and complete Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) or complete class work. A Year 12 female student commented:

> ...maybe half way through first semester you realised that you weren't going to have as much time as all the other students. You're being compared to every student in Victoria, yet during the holidays you've got less time because you spend eight hours a day at work.
>
> ...there has been less time and more pressure.

> They [employers] don't realise that we have classes with students who are not in the program, teachers set holiday work requirements...

As these students are on work-placements during school holidays, they reported difficulties in trying to keep up with set work while others reported difficulties in making up classes missed. Due to timetable constraints in terms of scheduling classes and work-placements, some students inevitably miss school classes. These students are often required to find out what happened during the class and make up missed work in their own time further adding to the pressures already felt.

Stereotyping of girls and boys in jobs

The cameo studies revealed that there is still some evidence of conventional gender stereotyping. Often the females were choosing traditional courses such as retailing, office administration and hospitality while males were favouring the automotive and electrical courses. However, for one country school, there has been a shift in enrolments for hospitality in 1997 with the traditionally female dominated class being out numbered by males.

The cameo schools in this investigation all reported that they are working towards eliminating this stereotyping in male and female vocational education choices. Nonetheless, this still proves a difficult task for any school or work-place and does not attend to the ways in which gender is being restructured in the labour market and work-place.

Stereotyping and other inequalities were also reported in the work-place. A small number of female students talked about being a "minority", male students making fun of them and being derogatory towards them. Even work-place trainers were not beyond criticism:

> I've spoken to a few people around the plant and they've said the trainers down there, they are not very good teachers and one of them has been described as a sexist pig. I mean he's not a very good person to have teaching the guys because he passes his views on, just in the way that he talks, you know, that girls are inferior and stuff like that.

One female student was resigned to the 'fact' that harassment and derogatory comments go with the territory - that is, if you choose a male dominated field of work then you have to be prepared to put up with the treatment:

> I've had bad experiences but as long as you can handle the jokes and you can joke with them and handle the guys, like some of them are as old as my grandparents...

When mentioning grandparents in the above quote, this student was referring to the problems associated with age difference between trainers and trainee students. She felt some older trainers were out of touch with the current gender debate and affirmative action policies.

However, another student asked why should anyone, male or female, have to put up with this sort of treatment. She suggested that some male trainers would benefit from further education and the female students would benefit from having female trainers and/or role models.

The other gender issues boys requiring more consideration, the lower representation in vocational courses of girls in comparison with, the limited understandings of gender issues amongst some career and Vocational Education Ed teachers, advisors and other issues associated sexual harassment in work experience sites (see further Kenway & Willis with Junor 1995). The not infrequent reports of hostile male environments have clarified the risks involved for 'non traditional' girls in traditional male environments. Interestingly, no schools mentioned the incompatibility of many jobs with family responsibilities and the implications of this for young women's career 'choices' and for boys understandings of the relationships between home and work and their responsibilities therein.

Student/school relationships

Students are encouraged to trust their future to such programs, to see them as 'a step ahead, a foot in the door' (Year 12 boy, industry based/school trainee). Such trust becomes a program's selling point to others. Students are not to put the program and implicitly other students' futures at risk by demonstrating a lack of trust. Yet a lack and loss of trust is evident in some schools.

> 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 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.

Student/employee conflict

A number of students reported feeling as though they were in 'no man's land'. That is, they are not full time employees of their work-placement site nor are they any longer 'ordinary' students. There was some conflict regarding the differing levels of maturity and responsibility required in the work-place compared with that required in school:

> It's hard. You try to make decisions for yourself and sometimes the teachers don't like it 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.

On the one hand these Year 11 and 12 students are expected to be mature, responsible adults capable of individual thinking in the workplace, while on the other hand they are school students. Where do these students fit in? As summed up by this industry based trainee student:

> They're almost running the school like industry but we're still only kids.

Intended destinations and high achievers

Schools differed in the intended and actual destinations of their students including going on to further study, employment etc. However, as mentioned in the following paragraph, some students were involved in vocational education programs that did not directly relate to their course or intended after school destination. For example, a student doing straight maths/science subjects in conjunction with office administration. Some students wanted to be, say, a nurse, but were involved in engineering type vocational programs.

In a number of schools, 'high achievers' were identified as the ones taking on the vocational education courses - despite its perceived lack of relevance to their intended destination. These students were involved in the program to add another 'string to their bow', to look keen for employers, to gain the extra TER points and have the added advantage of a certificate above and beyond their VCE.

At this stage it is not clear whether vocational education programs will develop a form of streaming associated with the high and low status jobs emerging from them and whether 'at risk' students will be their beneficiaries.

Concluding Comments

Clearly, the new policy agendas in vocational education and training are only beginning to have their effects in schools. While it is possible to make some educated guesses, how they will work, with what effects and in whose interests remain largely to be seen. However, the possibility exists for schools to contribute to justice in paid and unpaid work more directly than ever before.

Notes

1 The information in this paper stems from a three year Australian Research Council funded project entitled: *A Project Examining Vocational Pathways for Young Women and Men in the Senior Secondary Years.* It is a joint project between Deakin University, Victoria and Murdoch University, Western Australia with Sue Willis. One South Australian school is also participating in the research. This qualitative project is investigating how gender is constructed within the new vocational agenda and is currently in its second year. The aims of the study are to examine both the ways in which people in schools and industry respond to and rework the new vocational agenda for schools; and the different educational and vocational pathways which become available to boys and girls within this emerging agenda.

2. The 1996 budget papers indicated that the government aims to spend approximately $190 million on a four year school-to-work package. Over $80 million will be spent to expand vocational education in Australian secondary schools. Over $40 million will be provided for workplace training opportunities for students. $38 million will be set aside for up to 200 work placement co-ordinators to facilitate structured workplace learning for students. For the implementation of vocational education in schools, including school-based apprenticeships and traineeships $24 million will be earmarked. Finally, $7 million will be devoted in the next two years for a Jobs Pathway Guarantee Program to support the transition from school to work. All of this is part of a four year $3.7 billion training system to be put in place, including $23.4 million to train teachers in the latest industry standards and techniques (Kemp, 1996). Amongst such it is expected that MAATS will address the fact that the number of young people in apprenticeships was the lowest fort three decades with just over 50,000 in apprenticeships and 20,000 in traineeships in 1995.

3 In 1996 the Victorian project team conducted some initial research in eight secondary schools in a variety of localities including metropolitan, regional and rural regions. This part of the research (called cameo studies) involved intensive one to two day visits to the selected schools to talk with teachers and students, to collect documents and to examine the factors shaping Vocational Education programs.

4 Work placement refers to structured on-the-job assessed training over two years which is an integral part of vocational education programs: as distinct from work experience which is generally unstructured and conducted in Year 10 where students spend two weeks working in a place of business of their choice.

5 Industry and Enterprise Studies is a new VCE study aiming 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 compliment their theoretical understanding with experience gained through work placement which allows students to develop skills and knowledge in a workplace setting.

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PARTICIPANT PATHWAYS AND OUTCOMES IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: 1992-95

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This is an interim report on a Project funded by ANTARAC and due for completion in 1997. The overall objective of this project was *'to examine student aspirations, experience and outcomes in order to identify barriers to participation in and effective delivery of programs in Vocational Education and Training'.*

The research data

The Youth Research Centre holds a data set collected in 1990-1 and 1991-2 of 29,155 Victorian students intending to leave school in the following year, and a follow-up survey six months later of 10,985 completed returns giving data on whether they were working, looking for work or studying in the year after they left school. This data set has provided the starting-point for the Project, which we have divided into two Phases.

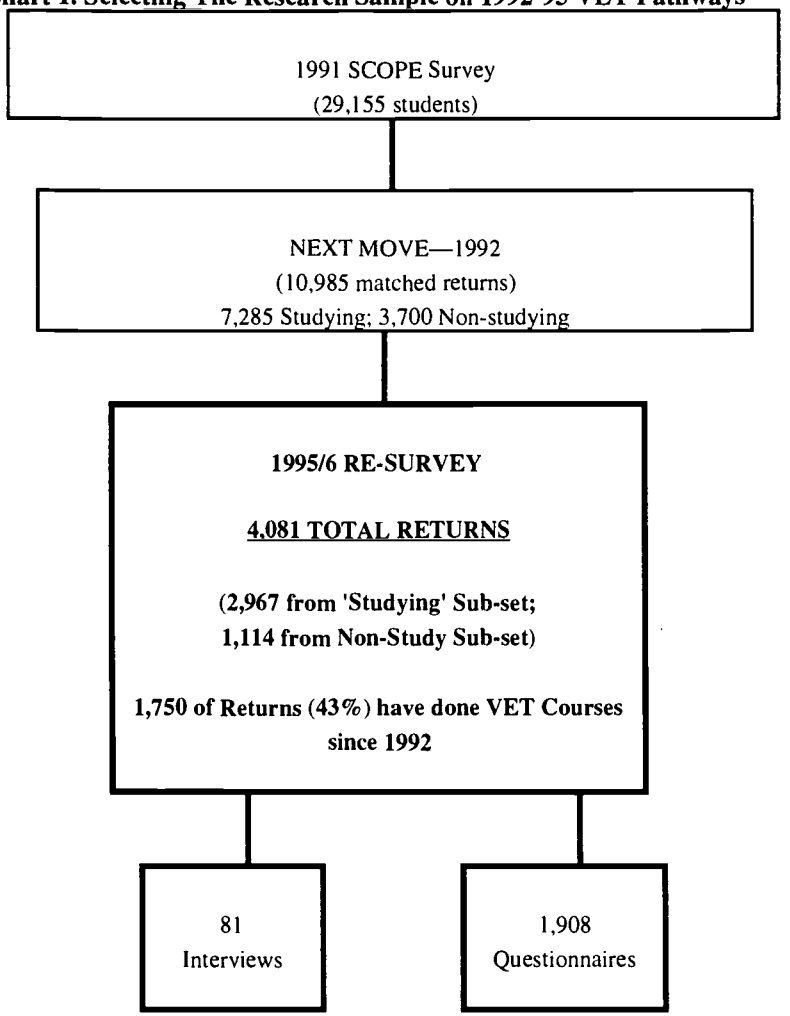
In Phase 1 of the Project, we have re-surveyed those 10,985 to identify the students who had moved into the Vocational Education and Training pathway. About 2,000 of these have also been followed up through a large-scale questionnaire, and about 80 of them have also been involved in an interview program, as shown in Chart 1.

Phase one

Initial Outcomes

The 10,985 who were initially re-surveyed were divided into a 'Studying' Sub-set (the 7,285 who in 1992 had reported that they were studying) and a 'Non-study' Sub-set (the 3,700 who in 1992 had not been studying). The findings from our initial re-survey of each of these sub-sets are given below in summary form.

Chart 1. Selecting The Research Sample on 1992-95 VET Pathways



Phase 2 of the project involves consultation with VET providers and policy analysts.

Chart 2. Summary Findings from Re-Surveys of Next Move Data Set (1995/96)

The 'Studying' Sub-set

- 7, 285 were surveyed and of these 2, 967 (or 41 per cent) responded
- the majority of respondents (73 per cent) had studied full-time
- fifty-three per cent of them had already completed their studies
- three-quarters had studied at a university with most of the remainder (24 per cent) enrolled in TAFE
- the majority (72 per cent) were enrolled in degree courses
- the main area of study was in science or arts, while metalwork and building were the most frequently mentioned apprenticeships
- *in general, the data on the 'Studying' sub-set suggests that university studies were chosen as the preferred option by those leaving school in 1991-2.*

The 'Non-Study' Sub-set

- 3, 700 were surveyed and of these 1, 114 (or 30 per cent) responded
- almost all (95 per cent) had been employed at some time since leaving school
- however, only 47 per cent had found full-time employment, and 47 per cent had been unemployed at some stage since leaving school
- as many as 80 per cent of the respondents had returned to study since 1992, and already 58 per cent of these had completed
- almost 60 per cent of those studying had been enrolled in a TAFE course
- *in general, the data on the 'Non-Study' sub-set indicates considerable job-insecurity, with substantial recourse to renewed study, especially in TAFE.*

The 1996 interview findings

The interview sample was not chosen or intended to be 'representative', but rather to provide feedback on specific elements of personal experience that might affect some of the key issues related to 'participation' which was the overall theme of the Project. As a result a sample of 81 participants was chosen, consisting of 43 females and 38 males, of whom 25 were from non-metropolitan areas and 55 had satisfactorily completed or graduated. A summary of the major findings is given here.

First, there is information from these interviews about the patterns of choice and subsequent progress of the participants as shown in Chart 3. Our previous research on young people's options indicates that the usual tendency of defining transitions beyond school in terms of certain predetermined *linear* pathways fails to do justice to the actual experience and choices of young people. There is little

doubt that, even for those who appear to be 'on track' in terms of the conventional mainstream models and patterns, moving into adult life and undertaking courses of study involves multiple considerations. The 'crossover' from one type of educational institution (school) to another (TAFE or a university), or from the world of school to the world of work, is not as smooth or clearly-defined as the 'pathways' metaphor might suggest. Often on leaving school young people find themselves in what is best described as 'uncharted territory' which gives a touch of unreality to the description of pathways in the Finn Report as a 'movement through a coherent set of educational and employment experiences leading to some identified destination' (Finn 1991, p. 94). We prefer in this Report to speak in terms of a *complexity of patterns*: ones that are *focused* in terms of having a set outcome in mind, ones that are *mixed* or involve a variety of choices, and ones that are *altered* in the sense that they involve definite changes of course and intentions.

Chart 3. Summary Findings on Patterns and Progress

Focused Patterns. *37 of the 81 were 'focused'*—16 male and 21 female. 23 planned full-time study and 10 wanted an apprenticeship. Interviews show they are cautious about taking risks, and while money is an issue, job satisfaction (and thus life satisfaction) rates more highly. Overall, *26 out of the 37 could be said to be satisfied* or even very satisfied with their lot.

Mixed Patterns. *35 had taken a less straight-forward path.* 28 of the 35 planned full-time study, but were more prepared to take a risk than the focused group. All possible combinations were covered: TAFE (8), University (2), TAFE and part-time work (9), TAFE to University (8), TAFE to University and back to TAFE (1), University to TAFE and back to University (1) and apprentices (4). 15 of the 35 did not get their first preference but are satisfied now, and while *most (24 of the 35) are happy* with where they have reached, there is *still a yearning to have 'done better'.*

Altered Patterns. *Only 9 of the 81* fit into this category. Of the 9, six intended to go to University and to study full time. Only 3 ended up doing this, and all 3 dropped out. 6 of the 9 changed courses at some point. The theme of 'education = employment = life satisfaction' is still strong with them, but *only 3* said with any conviction that they *were satisfied* with their lot.

Gender Patterns. Nearly half of the females (21) displayed 'focused patterns'—many will actively pursue what they see as their best life-path and, if things do not work out, will change their focus, with life satisfaction as the underlying factor. Apprentices (who were all male) were also focused, but many of the other males seemed unsure as to what they were aiming for, but thought that VET has helped them shape their future directions.
In general, the majority of the young women looked at their studies in terms of where they want to go, and more of the males looked at VET as a means of helping them find their way.

Included in the interview schedule were questions about the participants' perceptions of VET and their assessment of its strengths and weaknesses. Their views are summarised in Chart 4.

Chart 4. Summary Findings on Assessment of VET

Positive Aspects of VET. 72 of the 81 had something positive to say, and of most importance was the *practicality* of a course—the *relevance* it will have in the workplace. 27 noted the teaching and teachers as a positive aspect, related to their *teachers' experience* within their particular industry, and that the *teachers spent time to help* out students. 17 people saw their study as development or growth in their knowledge, skills and confidence.

Negative Aspects of VET. 15 had major problems with particular teachers. 10 criticised classrooms and facilities; 9 questioned the relevance of their course; and 10 felt that it was not challenging enough. 10 found the going hard in terms of work and time—particularly those returning to school from work or combining work and study. Lack of information, difficulties with cross-crediting, isolation, costs and the need to update some courses were also indicated.

Regional issues. Proximity to the family home was important. 50 of the 56 from Melbourne were still living at home, but 14 of the 25 rural respondents had moved (many of them into Melbourne) and cited problems with *lack of options in rural VET*, and with housing, finance, and isolation once they moved.

Changed Perceptions. Most significantly, for the overwhelming majority of participants there was a dramatic shift from negative preconceptions to highly positive re-assessments of the value of VET alternatives.

The 1996 survey preliminary findings

An initial analysis of the first 1,000 survey returns considered the types of post-secondary courses undertaken and the students' assessments of the relative merits of VET and university study. Of the 1,000, there were 288 (29 per cent) involved in Vocational Education and Training settings only, a further 181 (18 per cent) who had experience in both VET and university settings, and a final 538 (54 per cent) who had only undertaken university courses. Of the combined total of 469 who were familiar with VET settings, 377 (81 per cent) were either satisfied or very satisfied about their studies, while of the 717 with some university study, 585 (79 per cent) expressed satisfaction.

All of the 469 with some experience at least in VET were asked their assessment of a number of aspects of the institutions they had attended. The majority (60 per cent) rated the condition of the buildings highly, 59 per cent considered that staff interest in the students was good and at least 54 per cent also rated their teaching as good. The actual administration of courses and students' social life was considered less than good by a majority. The overall responses to particular items are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Rating of VET Characteristics (% Responses)

	good	fair	poor
Condition of buildings	**60**	33	6
Library facilities	41	35	14
Quality of teaching	**54**	39	5
Administration services	40	46	10
Staff interest in students	**59**	31	7
Social life	37	40	16
Disability support	27	40	9
Child-care program	21	29	19
Student counselling	28	38	11
Course advice	39	39	10

All (including those with only university experience) were asked for their response to a number of statements of a comparative kind concerning TAFE and university. While the overwhelming majority considered that the universities set higher standards and were more highly regarded, there was still a majority view that 'TAFE should be more highly regarded' (66 per cent) and opposition to the suggestion that 'TAFE courses are not of high quality' (60 per cent). There was a substantial 'no opinion' figure on some items. This is accounted for by those with only university backgrounds and who were thus understandably reluctant to make judgements concerned with non-university settings. The response to these items is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparisons between VET and University Courses (%)

Opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagre
Universities set higher standards	37	27	13	11	2
Universities are more highly regarded	**61**	32	3	3	1
I think Universities are over--rated	15	28	23	28	3
TAFE is more likely to lead to a job	6	19	41	29	4
Universities lead to higher paid jobs	23	41	18	15	2
TAFE courses are more practicle	17	**50**	22	10	1
TAFE courses are not of high quality	2	9	27	**48**	**12**
Tafe should be more highly regarded	**18**	**48**	27	6	2
TAFE is for those who miss out	3	20	18	**38**	**21**

There are some differences in responses from those who only had done university courses by comparison with those who only had experience in VET, and those who had done both VET and university studies. The main areas of disagreement are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Differences between VET and University Respondents (%)

		Agreement	Disagreement
I think Universities are over-rated	uni only	32	
	uni/VET	49	
	VET only	57	
TAFE should be more highly regarded	uni only	55	
	uni./VET	73	
	VET only	78	
TAFE is for those who miss out	uni/only		54
	uni/VET		58
	VET only		66

Opinions about the effectiveness of VET courses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Opinions About VET Courses (% Responses)

opinion	Strongly Agree	Agree	No opionion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Useful for future employment	**28**	**61**	7	2	0
Relevant for personal development	**17**	**55**	22	3	0
Worth reccommending to others	**18**	**51**	26	3	1
A waste of time	0	2	12	**51**	**31**
Generally well-organised	6	39	48	3	1
Generally well taught	8	40	48	2	1
Generally not very demanding	2	18	39	27	6
At least as good as the university	5	23	41	24	4
Generally better than I'd expected	6	24	62	5	0
Generally worse than I'd expected	1	2	62	20	9

While a high proportion of the university students again settled for the 'no opinion' option, it is significant that they did choose to commit themselves either positively or negatively on those items regarding the relationship between VET courses and future employment and whether undertaking TAFE courses was worthwhile or not. The vast majority of all respondents agreed with the suggestion that VET was 'useful for future employment' (89 per cent) and disagreed with the opinion that TAFE was 'a waste of time' (82 per cent). On some of the other items in this question, there were major differences of opinion depending on the degree of familiarity the respondents had with different types of courses.

In particular, those with some direct personal experience of VET study were much more positive (over seventy per cent in agreement) than their university counterparts about how well-organised and well taught their courses were. Over fifty per cent of those with some form of VET exposure agreed that their experience had been 'generally better than I'd expected' while 85 per cent of those with both VET and university backgrounds and 83 per cent with only VET experience considered that it was 'worth recommending to others'. These contrasts are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Differences of Opinion About VET Courses (%)

		agreement
worth recommending to others	uni only	54
	uni/VET	85
	VETonly	83
generally well-organised	uni only	22
	uni/VET	67
	VETonly	72
generally well-taught	uni only	23
	uni/VET	68
	VETonl	76
generally better than I'd expected	uni only	6
	uni/VET	53
	VETonly	54

Overall, it is clear from this sample that the assessment of VET courses by students (including those with only university experience) is very positive and in marked contrast to some of the findings from other surveys based on the attitudes of senior secondary students. A summary of the findings is provided in Chart 5.

Chart 5. Summary of Survey Findings

- A majority of VET students give a good rating to the condition of buildings, the quality of teaching and staff interest in students
- Both VET and university students consider TAFE courses more practical and that they should be more highly regarded
- While 32 per cent of university students might agree that 'universities are over-rated', this is the view of most VET students, including those who have also done university studies
- The majority of both VET and university students disagree that 'TAFE is for those who miss out'
- A majority also see VET as useful for future employment, relevant for personal development, and worth recommending to others, and are likely to strongly disagree that TAFE courses are 'a waste of time'
- By contrast with university students, three-quarters of those with direct experience of VET courses agree that they are well-organised and well-taught.

Perceptions of VET over time

The most significant finding from this survey of VET participants is undoubtedly the contrast between prior perceptions of what VET had to offer and the actual experience and outcomes of the participants. There were some striking differences between people's advance perceptions of VET and their later experience of it, as the in-depth interviews revealed.

Respondents were asked to compare their attitudes to VET in 1991—during their final year of high school—with what they think of it now. For most of the sample, 1991 was the year of their matriculation in VCE and many of their concerns lay in what, they thought, was the natural progression from secondary to tertiary education: *"Wanted to get down and do my work. More inclined to see whatever will come"; "Just thought I would get into uni and worry about the rest later."* This focus on a linear pathway from high school through to university, and there being nothing else, rested heavily on many of the participants' respective schools. As one person argued, schools *"Only promoted one pathway;lawyers and doctors, that was all they were interested in."* It was argued that the reputation of a school rested on the number of graduates who went on to university or landed themselves decent jobs related to their qualifications, thus the strong promotion of tertiary education for the students.

"The VCE at the time seemed like such a big deal. Now it just seems stupid worrying about it so much."

If there was any interest in alternatives to university, respondents had found it hard to get information on it in secondary school, it was *"Too much trouble to go and get the materials and information yourself."* There was *"No real help from the teachers"* and one *"Wasn't informed of what (TAFE) did."* A respondent

argued that there was *"Not much information on TAFE and their courses, everyone was too busy studying."* Another got the impression that VET was looked down upon by schools because *"TAFE came for those where difficulties arose at the end of year 12."* If there was to be any investigation of VET courses it was usually left to the individual to do it on their own: "TAFE *wasn't pushed at school. You had to do the application yourself"* and *"In the beginning of year 12 I didn't know much about (child-care courses)—but I researched it and found out a lot."* A reflection of this school-based attitude could be found in the VTAC process for students in 1991, in that *"At the time, VTAC were not including TAFE in their application forms."* One student found that, ironically, university itself was the first place to even push VET as a possibility, pointing out TAFE courses during an application interview.

In line with the school attitudes towards VET, many of the respondents in 1991 held overall positive views of university and parallel negative views of VET. It was perceived that a student *"Had to go to university, it was the be all and end all."* One person *"Always thought that uni was IT, everyone had to get into uni if they could."* In this pro-university atmosphere, VET was looked down upon—*"It was your second choice"*; *"Second best to uni"*; and *"A poor man's version of uni."* As one student saw it *"TAFE was second best to uni; especially at the end of year 12. I would have repeated at the end of year 12 if I hadn't gotten into uni."*

Extending beyond school influences and the conflicting attitudes between university and VET, there was also a negative perception of VET which was founded in peer group relationships and community attitudes. Some respondents talked of worrying about reactions from their friends and relatives to their studying VET: *"I wouldn't have been proud to tell people I was going to TAFE."* As one respondent pointed out, candidly *"I'm embarrassed to tell people, I'll say I'm at RMIT, rather than RMIT TAFE"*. Another felt she *"Was only doing a TAFE course, and the others (friends) were doing real study and getting a 'real certificate'."* Other respondents talked of having general negative attitudes which seemed to have come from their larger community. These sorts of attitudes commonly reflected generalisations which did not seem to be grounded in experience of TAFE or other VET colleges. By this VET was seen as 'scummy', 'crappy' or 'dodgy'; for 'builders/labourers, dickheads, dropouts and dumb people'—for those 'who couldn't get into university'; a series of male-oriented trade-schools; and a place to go to *"And then keep going to try and get out of it."* There was a 'snobby attitude' towards VET and, as one person argues, there was a 'stigma' attached to those who did it.

There were some respondents who were more worried about the specifics of VET courses and qualifications. One worried about the vocational focus of a

course and the concentration of their study into one area only; limiting the scope for other areas of interest. Another person thought that a basic VET course was a lot of time spent for what you got. Ten respondents came back to comparisons between university and TAFE in terms of qualifications—not too sure about the strength of a VET qualification in relation to a university degree.

"I didn't go to college and I have a job"

Some people were not very interested in doing any sort of study—VET or university. The common perception here was that, after twelve or more years of education, they just wanted to work or do nothing. An intense dislike for school, and their idea that VET or tertiary education was just an extension of school, was the major factor for these people—*"Didn't like school, just wanted to finish and get a job"*; *"Stay away from TAFE—had enough in high school as it was"*; and *"I wasn't going back to school after VCE, that was it as far as I was concerned."*

Others had an interest in doing TAFE from the very beginning—mainly those who displayed a focused pathway in their vocational interests. As mentioned previously, these respondents displayed active pursuit of information on their VET courses by themselves. On this level, VET offered the particular course which the person needed in their vocational pursuits—*"Uni wasn't on the level I wanted. TAFE was the better option for me because I could do what I wanted"*; *"Universities don't offer what I want."* Some of the respondents who had a more positive outlook on VET depended on the amount of information passed on to them from those who had direct experience of VET. One respondent mentioned industry people who talked of the number of impressive graduates coming through TAFE courses, impacting on his own decision to pursue a TAFE course. Another mentioned a good careers person at their school, who helped direct students into TAFE if they were interested in it. Many of the apprentices had parents, siblings, or friends who had their own experiences of apprenticeships and passed this on.

Judging by the nature of the majority of negative preconceptions of VET and the corresponding small amount of positive ones, it appears that most of it was determined by the quality of information which was passed on. Those who had little or no information on actual VET courses relied on generalisations and commonalities which gave a negative outlook on VET; those who had more first-hand information through friends/teachers/family displayed a more positive attitude towards VET.

This assessment is strongly supported by the clear changes in attitudes towards VET between 1991 and 1996; in that those who had negative ideas on VET changed their minds when they actually came to study there. As one person explained, in her VCE year *"TAFE wasn't considered, the degree was the be all*

and end all." Now, with the benefit of TAFE study, she sees her past attitude as *"A completely stupid idea. I wanted experience with my schooling."*

"Go for it; just do it"

People were happy with their VET experiences—*"Best two years of my life"*; *"Fabulous, much more positive"*; *"Fantastic!"*; *"Highly recommend it"*—for a variety of reasons. Some saw their in-class experiences as the main factor in their change of perspective: because of their teachers—*"They treated you more professionally, with a bit more respect"*; *"You get to know the teachers really well and you end up wanting to work with them"*;—and classmates *"You get to meet all sorts of different people"*; there is *"A good demographic spread."* Others saw TAFE as a positive start to tertiary education—something which had not been in their reckoning when finishing year 12: it's *"Better to do it the building block way. That is, TAFE first and then onto uni."*

"It's paid off literally. I'm working"

The main aspect of VET which respondents came across, and which changed their ideas on it, was the focus on vocational training: *"They (TAFE) prepared you for the workforce"*; *"Wider set-up to encompass larger areas of employment"*; *"For students who know what they want to do in a short time."* This especially came out for those who did end up going on to university and were able to compare both VET and tertiary education. University was a disappointment for some in comparison to VET because one was never sure of what use their abstract learning would be in the workplace—*"In uni you just line up and you are doled out your education. You'd be told x=y=z, but you wouldn't know what it meant"*; *"At uni you're still not taught industry skills, they only prepare you for what they are going to teach you in third and fourth year"*; university is *"Too theoretical on its own, you need TAFE to provide the practical side."* One respondent, noting the experience of a university law student in her office, found that *"University needs to prepare students better for work—they have no idea when they get into the workforce."*

Five respondents still maintained their previous stance on VET in 1996. Of these five, however, four had not done a VET course (one was long-term unemployed, two had gone to university only, and one had been working for five years). Three respondents, two presently university students, saw VET as good for a 'particular' kind of student, *"Catering for a particular kind of skill, a more hands on approach, whereas unis train you to be managers"*—*"If you're better with your hands than your brain then that's the place for you"*; and *"TAFE, etcetera, is aimed at the working class person."*

Other respondents who have never taken part in VET had heard through their friends and workmates that it may be 'pretty good'. The previously mentioned long-term unemployed respondent had heard some good things about it and, after

three years of looking for work, was considering looking into a hairdressing course. Another respondent who had gone straight into the workforce from school referred to his best friend, who had done an apprenticeship through TAFE and followed it up with short courses, as a positive result of VET—resulting in the respondent thinking of doing a TAFE course. Others are encouraged by employers and workmates to do TAFE courses for promotions—with their fees paid by the employer.

"I now tell people I go to TAFE and I don't flinch"

The overall glowing praise regarding VET after having done it, and the previously negative ideas associated with it while doing VCE in 1991, serve to reinforce the argument that VET perceptions can change, from generalisation and hearsay, into recognition and information linked with actual knowledge of the 'VET experience'; all of which may be influenced by peers at home and at work. The respondent who had previously been too ashamed to tell anyone that she went to a TAFE, sums it up best in saying *"I'm happy to say I am at TAFE. Many people at the bank are doing TAFE courses. Friends and family are proud of me just continuing study while working full time...it's good to have their support."*

Phase two

Items For Further Discussion

While it is obvious from the initial findings from this Project that VET courses are meeting with a very positive response from the participants, the evidence gathered does suggest some areas for further analysis in consultation with the VET providers themselves. The following questions have formed the basis for the second, 'consultative' phase of the Project.

1 The report suggests that there is a poor match between:

   (a) the attitudes towards VET courses prevalent in students' final school years, and

   (b) the relatively high approval rating for VET courses expressed by those who experience them after leaving school.

   Does this apparent mismatch accord with your own experiences and impressions?

   Does your experience suggest an extensive mismatch or something less significant?

   What other general observations would you offer on this school-to-VET issue?

2 What suggestions do you have for a more effective communication to final school years students of the high levels of approval given to VET courses by those who have experienced them?

3 The report shows that 80% of school leavers who initially do not undertake further study subsequently do re-enter study for some sort of course.

What implications are there for course design and course advice at both school level and in VET to better ensure that the needs of "re-entering" students are catered for?

4 Students in the "re-entry" cohort and others who move direct from school to study frequently combine further study with work and/or substantial domestic commitments.

What implications are there for VET arrangements and courses to better ensure that appropriate provision is made for these students?

5 What prospects do you see/what suggestions do you have for widening the range of VET options available for country students or for better supporting their transfer into metropolitan courses?

6 The report shows that many VET participants follow complex and mixed "pathways". What implications are there for exemption and cross-crediting arrangements between (for example) TAFE institutes and universities to ensure more effective and efficient use of time spent in education and training?

7. Are there other important factors which might have been expected to show up in this study but which don't appear in the data reported on here?

8. Are there more recent policy developments (e.g. changes to the HEC Scheme) which have implications for VET provision and which need to be considered alongside this data?

Consultative Phase—Early Responses

Discussions have now commenced with selected personnel in TAFE institutes whose responsibilities relate to issues highlighted by the interim findings of this study, and with other people who work in, or study policy development in relation to, VET. These discussions will continue into November 1996. Following opportunity to read a report on the interim findings and associated data, participants are providing responses in focus group settings and according to the eight items as set out above.

The responses to date suggest that the study will be able to refine its discussion of the "perceptions of VET" issue by providing institutional and VET staff perspectives. It should also be able to assemble "typical case" data showing how the needs of particular cohorts of students are recognised and accommodated at the local level. The implications for providers of increasingly complex "pathways" to and through VET are being explored and policy and delivery issues identified and examined.

The responses in the consultative Phase 2 to the interim findings from the data provided in Phase 1 by VET users should allow this study to provide a "state of play" picture from an institutional provider point of view, and some pointers to directions in aspects of VET policy.

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PATHS TO PATHWAYS: EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS FOR EDUCATIONALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE[1]

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For the past few years a number of providers of further education and training, teachers and funding bodies as well as welfare agencies, have been concerned about the lack of pathways from school into work or Vocational Education and Training (VET) for young people leaving school in the Geelong area. According to local Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) figures, the lack of participation in VET of young people in the Geelong region is one of the highest nationally. The declining youth labour market, particularly in Geelong, means that unless young people move from school to work or further education and training, their chances of finding or maintaining employment which can provide a viable income over the longer term, are slight. Following this initial interest and concern amongst a range of groups in Geelong, we set about gaining funding to examine this issue more closely.

We were concerned to work closely with young people themselves, rather than to work solely with the providers of VET. One core issue appeared to turn on a number of questions. Who are these young people? What have been their experiences of education and as early school leavers? What have been their experiences in looking for work? If they are currently unemployed, how do they spend their time and what are the barriers to undertaking VET courses which are intended to improve their skills and chances of finding employment? And, from the point of view of the providers, what programs were available in Geelong, who was providing them and what were the barriers to young people undertaking these VET programs?

We were concerned to look at the pathways of young people who were seen to have a disadvantaged background in terms of their educational achievement. According to policy in the vocational area, all young people aged 19 -22 are expected to be in education, training or work. However in the past two years the retention rates of students to the completion of Year 12 have been dropping from around 80% to much lower numbers in some local schools. There is a great deal

of anecdotal evidence as to increasing numbers of young people leaving school before the completion of Year 10, and at any time during Year 11 and 12.

Most of what we hear in relation to the growth in options for young people when they leave school is mainly available to those young people who have already succeeded in their education. The requirements for an apprenticeship today, for example, are qualifications gained at Year 11 or 12, compared with completion of Year 9 twenty years ago. Traineeships are becoming increasingly popular as a post school option but again the numbers of traineeships are few and naturally the entry level is adjusted upwards. Yet considerable numbers of young people find their secondary school years difficult academically, become disengaged from school for both educational, familial and personal reasons, and do not attain these high levels of achievement at school. So what happens to these young people when they leave school if they do not move into further education or training? What are the options available to them?

Contextual factors

Unlike the school sector, the post compulsory area of education is very complex. It is fraught with difficulty in that it is a totally deregulated sector and has a very complex system of public and private provision of programs, venues, and support structures for students. Some courses can be as short as four weeks; others can run for two or three years. For example, for a young person who is living away from their family, Austudy is available but rarely supplies enough money to live on. For other young people living independently, they need to have been unemployed for twelve months before they become eligible for a training allowance which will be paid to them whilst they are participating in VET programs. This delay in eligibility for benefits for young people who might already be at risk socially and environmentally seems quite problematic.

The mainstream educational post—secondary levels of schooling are provided through the University and Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sectors. These are the places where most young people continue their education after school. However young people with low levels of skills, are unable to move directly into a TAFE course without first improving their basic skills. In the TAFE sector, there are a range of access programs in basic skills to address these needs. Also, organisations such as the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) and the Adult Migrant Education Services (AMES), that is, the established providers of further education, often provide the basic literacy and numeracy skills that these early school leavers need in order to be able to access VET. The unions and Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABS) are providing vocational education and training for both employed and unemployed youth--

that is access programs into a particular industry and in tendering to provide Labour Market Programs (LMP) for long term unemployed people. The ITABS are mainly working with people who are already in employment and under the new arrangements to be put in place over the next few years will have an increasing role in shaping the direction of VET. In addition, there are the types of links between schools and enterprises that David Gallaher and John Bromilow have already indicated in this book. Hence the necessity to collaborate with a number of public and private providers of Vocational Education and Training (VET) labour market programs in gathering a range of perspectives about young people and their experiences of work and VET once they have left school.

The situation of welfare agencies (or the community sector) who have become registered private providers of Labour Market Programs (LMP) is especially interesting. Welfare agencies have moved into VET providing programs for long term unemployed people. Many Skillshares are also operating through welfare agencies such as the Salvation Army and the Brotherhood of St Laurence. In the course of the research we also attempted to liaise with independent agencies which have been established solely to provide training at national, state, or regional levels. In the registration of private providers, it is important to note that a number of new providers who are involved in VET for commercial purposes have been established. Such organizations are often located in other states. For course provision in Geelong many freight materials in, deliver the course in minimal time and disappear. This seems to us to have been quite problematic. Since the introduction of competitive tendering, the cooperative local networks have been dismantled. Many private providers refused to be interviewed, presumably for fear of giving away their competitive edge.

Post school sector

In the post school sector, as with the school and university sector, there has been a steady erosion of funding with the public funding declining and resultant need for an increase in private sector provision of VET programs. Following the Hilmer report there has been an attempt to establish a competitive market economy in the provision of VET programs (Hilmer, 1993). The introduction of compulsory competitive tendering along with the Working Nation support of Labour Market Programs (LMP) such as LEAP (Landcare Environment Action Program), has resulted in a rapid increase in provision in the sector. In Victoria, the State Training Board called for the registration of private providers of VET and in the space of approximately three years now over 2,000 agencies have registered as private providers of VET. It is a hugely expanding industry which needs to be researched in some systematic manner. However, the introduction of competition for program provision mitigates against this systematic approach. As the private sector increasingly is being expected to provide these programs,

access to them by disadvantaged young people needs to be researched in order to establish the extent to which their needs are being met.

We have found is that there is a tremendous difference in the level of provision of VET programs which are available for young people to access. The irony for this sector is that whereas main stream government funding and resources—in terms of buildings, libraries, and computer labs—are provided for school education, TAFE education, and university education, in the VET and labour market program sector, (i.e. programs for unemployed people) the responsibility for a great deal of this provision has fallen to the welfare agencies. This means that governments are no longer providing venues supported at the level of technology and resources provision that one might expect. This gives rise to a further question. Are we seeing the emergence of a two tier structure of provision in which young people who have gained access to mainstream provision in either TAFE or universities, experience one level of education and training, and another level of provision for young people who have failed to meet these standards finding themselves in community houses or the Salvation Army meeting hall?

At the national level there has been a number of factors that have impacted on our research. We all know about the continued decline of the youth labour market, the rate of 27% unemployment amongst young people that Minister Reith has referred to. However in Geelong it is much higher than that. In one area in particular, the anecdotal reports suggest that the rate is probably much higher again. During the progress of our inquiry funding for labour market programs was slashed. Yet those working in the Geelong region have said that such programs had been particularly successful. For example the LEAP projects have been very successful around the surf coast area. The young people involved are reported to have enjoyed the balance of conservation work, constructing pathways etc., with the added attraction of surfing at lunch time. The Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) Youth Action Centre Case Managers commented on how successful these LEAP programs have been in Geelong, where there really is very little employment available for youth. However, the funding for these programs has been withdrawn in the recent changes to the Labour Market Program (LMP) and the future provision of VET for disadvantaged young people appears certain to decline.

One of the emergent themes of our discussions about young people is the transitory nature of their existence. Many of them have dropped out of school between Years 10-12, leaving school and home at the same time, and are thus in that process of resestablishing themselves. They move from a series of transitional accommodation into something more stable and are consequently in a very precarious situation. It is extremely difficult for youth workers to keep track

of them, especially when their local community centre has been closed or the youth worker with whom they have built a relationship has lost her job and has had to be deployed elsewhere as a result of welfare cuts in general. Withdrawal of funding from services for these most vulnerable young people thus leaves them without the very support structures they need in order to be able to succeed in VET or work.

School factors

The relationship between the school sector and post school sector is very complex. Schools have undergone many changes in the past few years and it became apparent in our interviews that many of the young people who had been early school leavers expressed great dissatisfaction with their experience in school. In an escalating spiral, they had failed to achieve, and become increasingly alienated as the academic program intensified in difficulty. They dropped out, many in the belief that they would easily find work. This is actually a crucial issue that has arisen from the research. When we began, we aimed to look at the 16 to 20 year olds, that is young people who are eligible to leave school. But the situation of the 12—15 year olds was so often raised as a matter of great concern to those working with them. Again and again participants have been arguing that this is the group whose needs must be urgently addressed. Clearly, these age groups are not well catered for, the expectation being that they are at school. There are all sorts of policy contradictions here; that one has to be 16 for this program funding, 17 for that, 15 for another, unemployed for 6 months, and so on and so on.

But because of the new policies that are driving schools, the 'marketisation' of school education, schools do not want to be known as the 'drop in' centre for all the 'trouble makers', and very young students are being 'forced' out of a system which is failing considerable numbers. In our research we have looked at how the restructuring of schooling generally has affected some low achieving students and looked at an individual case study in particular, to determine how questions about training needs and interest in VET intersect with school restructuring.

If we look at the kinds of things happening at the moment, there is a certain ferocity about some of these changes. The restructured curriculum, which is in fact outcomes-based education appearing for the first time, means that there is an expanded range of subjects but a narrower focus because of the expanded breadth. And within that, questions of welfare allocations, resources and time, the kinds of things that provided support for the communities and families generally have been enormously eroded. Teachers who once had two hours of teaching and the remainder of their load made up by welfare, now find that the reverse is the case, so if they are lucky they can give two hours in their non-teaching time to some of these very pressing matters in students' families.

The Schools of the Future program, which is basically a matter of devolution and local management, means that the focus is on increased accountability, that schools are tied to sets of priorities in their charters and can hardly deviate. There is little flexibility to look at those other community issues or other kinds of pro-active policies that might better be pursued in class. The need is for schools to market their image of success, so that even in cases where schools were performing very well at an informal level in terms of community support, time and resources and so on, schools become fearful about speaking about these issues. Instead they want to talk about their success in curriculum programs and other initiatives; it is not seen as a 'plus' to be able to talk about one's school as being successful in the community in terms of welfare needs.

There are also difficulties associated with the teaching of literacy and numeracy compounded with low socio-economic factors within the local communities and an inter-generational history of early school leaving. Now it is a tough call for a school to succeed against this range of factors of course, none the less many of them make sterling efforts. Again, let us resist blame, but if we come to the case of an individual it goes without saying that early school leaving is often a function of these problems in the basic skills areas of literacy and numeracy. As a consequence students have feelings of being labelled, of being scapegoats and so on, and usually where there is conflict arising at family level it will manifest in some form at school or with other agencies in the community. This is regarded as an individual's school failure, but is one which in reality, constitutes the failure of schools to meet the needs of particular groups of young people.

Now how do these factors intersect? Take, for example, the case of a thirteen year old who has difficulty in those basic skills areas, whose behaviour has become too difficult for most schools to manage, and who wants to leave school, but, whose aspiration is to become an apprentice. The family expectations are for him/her to leave school and gain an apprenticeship. Now the background to this example, in this particular community is well known; parents who left school at an earlier time were able to gain that kind of opening. That is the only history they have to pass on to their young person and they thus maintain that expectation. It is very hard for them not to blame either the system or their child for not having an opportunity when leaving school at an early age. Yet the openings are not there. A student needs to be completing Year 11 before they can contemplate that sort of opportunity. We have neither the kind of accurate information going to or appropriate support coming from the family, much less an ability by the family to access alternative sources of information or support.

The findings

The question that was posed by this study was why is there such a poor uptake of these VET programs? The decline in the labour market generally and labour market programs for youth does not appear to be understood by these young people and the relevance of this decline in work has been even harder to clarify for some of their families. Either way, the school expectations about academic interest and behavioural conformity are just not met. The student's behaviour has become too hard, too difficult and so on, and with the kinds of pressures imposed by the policy of restructuring within this state in particular it is very hard then for the school to move even half way to meet them. So we are in a bind here and there aren't extra resources of any kind to be found to meet the very complex and time consuming demands of these young people.

It seems that we have got to look further at the impact of restructuring. As a community we've also got to ask questions about the price of it. How far can we allow young people like this to be sacrificed? On the specific question of VET, some writers in the field now argue that we ought to consider talking about vocational issues earlier, far earlier than Year 11. And in fact, if a child of thirteen is dropping out of school, then we have got to get in very early and talk about some of the issues, not-withstanding the fact that the realities are 'training for what?' There are a host of questions there, and we can't consider training without looking at what schooling is and where kids like this have come from.

The interim findings of our project, like those of Dwyer, Harwood, Poynter, and Wyn in this volume suggest that the policy and funding changes have led to tremendous uncertainty, tension and fear, amongst those working in the field. Amalgamations, job loss, program closure, compulsory competitive tendering, have been absolutely disastrous for the community networks which were required to be able to create viable opportunities for these young people. These policies have broken down previously established working relationships. Whereas before a group would meet and find the best possible solution for a student, now they are grabbing everyone who comes through the doors with a view to gaining funding. People are far too busy to participate in collaborative ways in a system designed to promote competition.

Given that the training sector likes to espouse the rhetoric of 'best practice', we have found very worrying conditions among the teachers interviewed. There are few professional networks in which they participate to sustain their work. There is no professional development, almost no planning time, no opportunity for professional discussion or evaluation procedures. This gives rise to a number of questions. What quality of education can we offer without the routine provision of structured evaluation, teacher development opportunities, and assessment procedures? The funding patterns of teachers being employed for six

to ten weeks has had a disastrous effect on their long term planning in their own career development. We are talking about pathways for young people; at the same time we should be also talking about pathways for teachers in the VET sector. We found appalling working conditions for some of the teachers and trainers, in the deregulated, deskilled training sector : chiefly casual sessional employment, and no benefits. Increasingly the casualised labour in TAFE, ACFE and AMES means these teachers are joining the working poor. They are working in several programs at the same time in order to make a living wage.

Our research has shown that disadvantaged young people need a range of support structures to assist them to make the transition from unemployment into full time training or employment. Many of these young people have a number of personal problems ranging from health issues, to family problems to homelessness. But most VET programs are now designed as competency based curriculum packages which do not allow for the individual needs of these young people. Thus many of the mainstream VET programs are unsuccessful with these young people. There is less money going into the welfare agencies to provide the supplementary support to the VET programs. The closing and the amalgamation of Skillshare, which had become drop-in centres for many of these young people, has had a constant disruptive effect on the Geelong region during the period of this research. It still has not settled down because the redevelopment of these structures has not yet taken place. As a consequence we found that people have lost their jobs, so they were no longer available to speak to us. Some people who were involved in the closures and amalgamations were understandably not interested in participating in our research. They were looking at their own survival and many people with whom we had established contact and who had gone into networks had lost their jobs so that entire networks had broken down. Young people who have become alienated from the school system through failing are often particularly difficult to work with. The commitment and motivation of the people working in this sector is to be commended and we are constantly encouraged by the level of strength and enthusiasm shown by them. However, it is currently at breaking point.

The other finding is that young people who have become early school leavers with low levels of skill are unable to benefit from a narrow VET approach, until they have their personal development life skills, healthy living issues addressed as an integrated part of VET courses. Experienced teachers tell us that a more integrated approach is necessary. For example one respondent pointed to the very short module on life skills, which is over and done with in the first week and then no more of these issues are addressed. The very reason that these kids have appeared in a labour market program is that they have a range of life skills problems that need to be addressed.

Recommendations

The programs that have been extremely successful working with these young people are unfortunately, very expensive. They are based on very labour intensive pedagogy, (often one to one ratio), especially in the programs for the earliest school leavers, that is the 12—15 year olds. There are two programs in Geelong, both of which take around about 12 children at a time, and there are hundreds of children on the waiting list in the 12—15 year old section. In the current climate, the government is unlikely to fund expensive programs, despite their success.

Such programs need to be located within groups. We have heard repeatedly about the importance of peer groups for these teenagers. We need a student centred pedagogy, rather than a restrictive competency-based curriculum approach, a package that so many trainers are willing to deliver, regardless of the students who are in the group in front of them. Hence we need to acknowledge the importance of peer culture and networks in the success of VET courses. In one of the projects running in Geelong they claimed that 70% of jobs are found informally through networks. However, young people who are disengaged from home and community do not have these networks to support them so they are even further disadvantaged. Providers of courses also point out that the peer culture is an incentive for entry into the courses and that teenagers often stay as a result of that peer network.

Overall, this suggests that we need to adopt a community development approach, with student centred pedagogy as part of flexible delivery and timetable arrangements. But this is currently not possible under the DEET funding arrangements. We also need a general module as an integrated part of all VET which can identify and contribute to development of personal skills. Some of the areas that we think need to be attended to include generic life skills: we need to reflect workplace expectations in personal, organisational and attendance requirements and particularly here in Geelong we need more youth-centred activities. Our final recommendations would be that these young people need to be seen as an integral part of the community, and thus a coordinated approach to their VET needs to be developed between a range of agencies and industries and the school sector.

Finally, a word about participation, let's focus on the question of community costs. Whilst a business enterprise might well find the prospect of employing these youngsters unattractive, they are part of our community, so what are we going to do for them? The continued rates of youth unemployment, the high cost of community alienation, and disengagement needs to be accepted by the community, including local enterprises. We believe that the community needs to take further responsibility in providing community based VET, programs which

will assist these young people to gain some sort of confidence and self respect and from this starting point to give them an opportunity to create a successful future.

Notes

1 An ANTARAC funded project, *Paths to Pathways: Educational Pathways for Disadvantaged Young People*, being conducted by DCEC members Jennifer Angwin, Colin Henry, Louise Laskey and Robin McTaggart, with the assistance of Nicola Picken.

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ENHANCING GIRLS' POST SCHOOL OPTIONS THROUGH CAREER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION[1]

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The purpose of this chapter is to focus on the different approaches to enhancing girls' post-school options through career education. It is our view that considering the implications of career education for vocational education is important as career education has a history of awareness of gender issues for girls. We will consider the ideas which dominate career education for girls and those which are emerging but subordinate. Our research indicates that many of the ideas and practices developed to enhance girls' post school options have not become part of vocational education programs which appear in some cases to have retreated to an era of gender blindness. Our purpose in offering this paper is to show vocational educators a range of possible ways of enhancing their programs for girls. It is also our purpose to offer a critical analysis of this range in order to clarify strengths and weaknesses.

Career education: An ambiguous concept

'Career education' is a generic term and usually refers to the provision of advice, information, experience and counselling about post-school employment. For example, the National Board of Employment Education and Training's (NBEET) report called *Strengthening Career Education in Schools* (1991) basically endorses the following definition provided by Firkin, Sams and Spalding (1986):

> assisting students to gain an awareness of their abilities, interests and values; acquire a knowledge of the world of work and further education and training; develop decision making skills based on self knowledge and the range of options open to them; and acquire the skill and knowledge necessary to make these decisions (p. 1).

Career education, however, has had a rather a rather ambiguous identity in the curriculum. In some states it has been called Work Education and some curriculum developers prefer this term because it suggests a rather different orientation. However, career education should not be confused with vocational education which has a much more specific focus usually with a specific area of employment in mind. Neither should it be confused with vocational guidance which is a professional counselling service provided by psychologists, usually with a teaching background.

Having made these distinctions it is also worth noting that the lines between these areas are becoming increasingly blurred, given the vocationalisation of the curriculum arising from national agendas. Suffice to say here that this blurring is occurring as a result of the introduction of the Mayer key competencies and of the current enthusiasm for weaving strong vocational strand into the post-compulsory years (see Schools Council 1994) and for collapsing the distinction between general and vocational education. In this latter instance, all areas of the curriculum are being encouraged to connect to career education in various ways, whether it be by providing information about the world of work, by developing in students work related competencies, or by providing students with information about pertinent careers.

What has long been a thorn in the side of those who sought to enhance girls' post-school options through career education is that traditionally career education has focused on paid employment and has not considered unpaid work as part of its brief. However, *Career Education in Australian Schools* (1992) offers a change in focus with regard both to the notion of career and of work. It defines career and work thus: 'Career' refers to the sequence of an individual's paid and unpaid work roles over a life time. 'Occupation' refers to a broad generic classification of particular work roles and a 'job' is a specific work role. 'Work' covers a wide range of productive activity, both paid and unpaid. It includes full time employment; part time, casual and contract employment; family responsibilities; voluntary and community service, school study, further education and training; and cultural activities (p. 1).

Such gender-inclusive definitions as these are promising. The extent to which this promise is fulfilled remains to be seen and depends, of course, on many factors, not the least being the capacity of teachers to work with such understandings. Clearly, in the case of girls, it is quite crucial that the careers and vocational educational teacher/coordinator is well informed about the gender issues associated with the labour market, education and training.

Let us now turn to that body of material directed towards the career education of girls and focus first on the dominant agenda within it. Our purpose is to give a sense of the field and to offer some evaluative comments. It should be noted

however, that the material and approaches designed specifically for girls have not necessarily arisen from the efforts of careers specialists and neither have they been part of the mainstream agenda of careers education. Thus, their status within the field overall tends to be somewhat marginal although it is clear that it has had some influence on the directions just outlined.

Enhancing girls' post-school options

Over the past two decades, many innovative ideas and a wealth of materials have been both developed to improve girls' post-school options through career education, and put to use with students. These can be grouped as practices which focus on (i) the individual, (ii) institutional structures and practices and (iii) culture and meaning. We will take each in turn concentrating initially on the first because this is where the bulk of the effort has been and because this constitutes the dominant paradigm. In the next section we will consider the other two foci.

The dominant agenda—a focus on the individual

There are two main overlapping approaches in the body of work which focuses on the individual girl. The first approach seeks to change girls' choice of school subjects, of career, of a marriage-and-family-first orientation and of possibly leaving school early. The second seeks to change girls' gender identity. The former draws strongly from human capital theory and the latter from sex role socialisation theory. Generally it is believed that girls are most likely to change their choices if they have some understanding of the psycho-social reasons why they make these choices in the first place, if they can appreciate that there are good reasons to change and if they feel sufficiently strong 'in themselves' to be able to change.

Increased retention in school and post-school education and different patterns of participation in both are the two main purposes of the approaches designed to change girls' choices. There are two dominant underlying messages here. The first message seeks to persuade individual girls that they must plan for life-long paid work and that they must recognise some very direct connections between the educational 'choices' that they make and their future careers. Subject choices must be career choices and further, girls must extract the greatest vocational investment from whatever school subjects that they select. In this regard girls are provided with information about the increased participation of women in the work force, and the changing nature of the family and thus the importance for women of gaining a secure job and earning an adequate income in 'this day and age'. The other main message explains to them the 'benefits' of subject and career choices associated with mathematics, science, technology and trades.

Table 1 provides some examples. These fields are presented as having the greatest career investment potential. They are also presented as the fields which are most associated with male stereotypes. In order to counter such stereotypes and to persuade girls to invest in these fields, girls are taught about the ways in which work and society are stereotyped by gender and the implications this has for women and their work; locking them into the family or into careers with little pay off in terms of security or financial reward. The overall implication in these approaches designed to change girls' choices, is that the purpose of schooling is gaining credentials which will convert into further study or future work.

The strategies and materials associated with changing girls' choices usually include the provision of information to girls about the horizontal (between job sector) segmentation of the labour market by gender, the changing nature of women's work and the significance of maths and science courses as prerequisites for further study. They may also include any combination of the following activities: careers information nights for parents, girl-only career classes, visits to and/or work experience in 'non-traditional' study and work places - 'taster' visits. The visits may or may not involve 'hands on' activities. They also include slide and picture sets and videos usually each with teachers' notes and promotional materials including fliers, T-shirts, stickers, brochures and posters. Role modelling by women in 'non-traditional fields' is a central strategy here and it can involve the use of visiting speakers who are considered role models, booklets consisting of pictures and stories about women in a variety of non traditional fields and observing role models going about their daily work through visits or 'shadowing'.

TABLE 1

Programs designed to change girls' choice of subject: some examples

EXPANDING YOUR CAREER OPTIONS WITH MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE, 1983, by Robyn Plaister: A handbook for planners of conferences to broaden young women's career options.

GIRLS COUNT IN MATHS AND SCIENCE, 1984, by Mary Barnes, Robyn Plaister and Ann Thomas: A handbook for teachers.

BROADENING GIRLS' SUBJECT CHOICES: 1987, an inservice and curriculum development project funded by the Commonwealth and conducted in Victoria.

TABLE 1 CONTINUED

MATHS MULTIPLIES YOUR CHOICES, Victorian Department of Labour, 1990: A highly visible advertising campaign on television and radio, press advertisements and interior tram panels as well as in the form of a printed information package. It was directed at parents and at girls between 13 and 15 and included an information phone line. The key slogan was 'Don't pigeon hole your daughters.' It originated in Victoria. It was formally evaluated and the results showed a very high awareness of the campaign and a 17% increase in the number of girls planning to continue with maths and science in their final years of school. The same program was used in Western Australia the following year.

Occasionally drama and popular music are also employed to make certain points and promote discussion. More usually work sheets and surveys are used. These approaches are usually conducted outside the curriculum mainstream. Examples of programs designed to encourage girls to take up non-traditional careers are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Programs presenting non-traditional career options for girls: some examples

TRADESWOMEN ON THE MOVE: Operated across Australia in the late 1980s. Involved school visits from tradeswomen and apprentices, training workshops, intensive one day and one week training courses Skill Expo activities and the use of a Register of Women in Non-traditional Occupations (see below). Included the extensive use of the slogan *Girls can do anything!*

TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR GIRLS: Set up by the Victorian Government in 1989, this project was designed to encourage participation in the grants to selected secondary schools, technical work experience for girls and careers counselling. Included the use of *A Technical skills for girls: information kit* containing a selection of brochures and fliers about women in the work force, technical and scientific careers and the relationship between subject choice and such careers (for eg. Maths *multiplies your choices* booklet). A computer data base of employers offering non-traditional work experience was established and strategies were developed to help and support girls in these placements. *The sky's the limit*, was published in 1990 to share the framework of the wide range of strategies used and to offer the project as a model for others.

TABLE 2 CONTINUED

POSTERS: *Pic A Print* (South Australia) shows women and men in non-traditional occupations; *On Cue* (Queensland) posters and annotated reading list.

The ACTU WORKING WOMEN'S CENTRE: With state and Commonwealth funding, this Melbourne-based centre provided speakers and publications about working women. A transition grant for *The Register of Women in Non-traditional Occupations* provided a source of speakers for schools. The Centre also assisted with posters titled *Jobs for the Girls.*

TRADESWOMEN IN RESIDENCE IN 1993, This concept was trialed at a primary school in the ACT. A tradeswomen and her female apprentice taught girls in Year 6 how to build outdoor seating for all the sstudents. The girls' were found to improve confidence and to transfer across the entire curriculum.

Integral to approaches which focus on the direct links between schooling and work is a concern with certain indirect links. These approaches seek to change girls' identities in order that they will change their choices. It is often the case that teachers feel that girls will not attend seriously to matters associated with their future careers and will not change their allegedly stereotypical choices until they let go of some aspects of their gender identity and until they feel better about themselves and are strong enough to defy gender conventions. This belief has led to the development of a range of activities which are often offered to girls in conjunction with, or in support of attempts to change their choices. These may be conducted within the career education program but are more likely to be part of specially devised programs 'welfare/pastoral care' programs for which girls are withdrawn from their normal classes—workshops, camps, conferences and the like. Or, such activities may be included in English, social studies, health, personal development and media classes. The issues addressed here include sexuality and present and future relationships (friends, family, boyfriends, partners). Such topics often become the content in programs which seek to help girls to clarify their values and which aim to develop in them the skills associated with conflict resolution and assertiveness. These skills are regarded as important in negotiating the difficulties associated with blending paid and unpaid work and in working in non-traditional domains.

Slogans such as *Girls can do anything!* and *Subject choice equals future jobs* symbolise the idea that is central to this discourse; the individual girl is largely only constrained by her attitudes and values and by the opportunities available to her. Given the appropriate choices and chances it is clearly believed that she can find a secure and well rewarded place in the world of work. These approaches to

enhancing girls' post-school options which focus on changing the individual girl and her choices have strengths and weaknesses which we have listed at some length elsewhere (see Kenway and Willis with the Education of Girls Unit of SA 1993). Here, we will simply summarise our key points, relating them particularly to career education.

Some evaluative remarks

These approaches make very clear the importance for girls of securing life-long economic independence through paid work. In so doing, they usually indicate that given the changed nature of the family and given married women's increased participation in paid work, girls would be unwise to plan for dependency or to enter the future without sufficient skills to allow them to avoid the extreme exploitation and vulnerability of the secondary labour market. These are important points. The necessity of planning for paid work cannot be over emphasised and certainly girls will benefit from career advice which goes beyond matters of preference and requires that girls consider associated conditions of work. It is particularly important that girls learn how best to operate in the restructured work environment. Equally important are these approaches' attempts to challenge the identification of certain types and levels of knowledge and work with males. Certainly girls should be encouraged to consider the full range of work possibilities without feeling or being constrained by their gender and certainly they should know about the threshold requirements for all sorts of study and work. Further, there are some positive aspects to strategies which stress girls' capacities to choose. Girls should be encouraged to see themselves as agents in constructing their own futures. In a sense, human capital theory's emphasis on agency counteracts socialisation theory's emphasis on passivity. And, finally, through single sex classes, girls do tend to move collectively towards generating a stronger sense of both female esteem and female solidarity, both of which are important ingredients of a better future, particularly in enterprise bargaining contexts.

Nonetheless these approaches offer a rather superficial understanding of the connections between gender identity, work and indeed school knowledge. The emphasis on the segmentation of the labour market into gendered types of work tends to overshadow the important distinction between primary and secondary labour markets. Certainly, beyond the discussion of stereotyping, there is no explanation provided to students about why the labour market is structured in such a manner. And, in implying to girls that their future is largely a matter of options and choice, they give them little understanding either of life's very real constraints or how best to exercise choice within constraint. Overall this stress on choice suggests a certain innocence about society, culture and the world of work

and ignores particularly those, sometimes obvious sometimes subtle policing processes by which even the most meritorious women are often kept 'down and out'. Further, because the above strategies focus mainly on careers, they imply to girls that in thinking about their futures they should also focus mainly on careers. They therefore down-play many girls' concern about how, in the future, they will blend family work and paid work. Ignoring such topics leaves girls in ignorance about employment and other conditions which pertain to family matters. Equally, the emphasis on role models demonstrates a certain innocence about the wide range of factors which influence girls' choice of career and rather paradoxically, while seeking to normalise the abnormal, confirms it. The move to encourage girls to see the career investment potential of maths, science and technology, does not register other important reasons for continuing to study such subjects. A good grasp of mathematics should provide girls with the competence and confidence to understand and critically interpret the ways in which mathematics shapes and informs much of their lives. Equally, it should enhance girls' capacities to negotiate their way through the labour market and the world of work. Further, involvement in science and technology permits girls the opportunity as adults to influence a range of processes which will have a strong impact on society and culture. Finally, the emphasis on maths, science and technology allows the inference that other areas of knowledge and work are to be negatively valued in comparison. Indeed, one of the difficulties here is that girls who do not change to non traditional choices are treated as irrational and even recalcitrant. This buys into a very sexist way of thinking about skill, merit and worth which gendered job theorists have sought to challenge.

The emerging agenda

In the late 80s, as alternative feminist theories of the labour market developed and as liberal feminism lost its ascendancy in girls' education policy circles, policy on career education for girls came to be more fully influenced by other feminisms. As a result, alternative ways of addressing career education arose. While strong shades of the earlier phases noted above remained, alongside them ideas developed about the need to recognise and value women's work and its contribution to society, including the contribution of women from ethnic minorities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (see Commonwealth Schools Commission 1987, p. 51). Such ideas were embodied in the notion of the gender inclusive curriculum which is most usefully explained in the work of Andrea Allard (1991, 1992). Accompanying this concept was the suggestion that career education should include a strong component about the world of work, with specific reference to work and family studies and the relationship between paid and unpaid work (see Commonwealth Schools Commission 1987, p. 51).

These ways of thinking continued into more recent policy on the education of girls, at least at the national level and along-side them we now see some acknowledgment of the culture and politics of gender in the workplace. In this regard, *The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls, 1993-1997* (Australian Education Council 1993), talks about 'broadening work education' and argues that:

> Work education needs to acknowledge and critically examine the historical forces underlying such things as:
>
> the influence of work bargaining processes, including trade unions, on the male and female work forces,
>
> cultural perceptions of work (1993, p. 29).

These foci point to the two approaches to career education which we will discuss in this section—namely, those with an institutional focus and those with a focus on culture and meaning. We will draw out a range of ideas for careers education which are emerging in the field and which have the potential to offer girls a more comprehensive and rich understanding of themselves as critically informed workers and as informed and critical advocates for girls' and women's rights in paid and unpaid work.

A focus on institutional structures and practices

Power, institutionalisation and differentiation are the central categories in those theories about the labour market and curriculum which focus on institutional structures and practices. The labour market and education are seen to be organised in such a way as to continually empower some groups and to disempower others—gender, race, class and ethnicity have been key variables in these analyses. Overall, education is seen to be geared to the interests of employers rather then employees. It is rare for career education programs for girls to address these matters.

Discussions of the organisation and exercise of power have been conspicuous largely by their absence in most career education materials and programs for girls. In the programs discussed above the students are presented with a vision of the labour market as a set of fixed structures within which they are able to move upwards or across if they have the credentials and the will. Any barriers to movement are understood either as the fault of the individual person, or as an exercise of bad faith or discrimination on the part of other individuals. Such discrimination is portrayed as exceptional rather than endemic, as individual rather than structural. Students are usually taught to deal with such bad faith

through assertiveness or conflict resolution. Even the legislation developed to assist workers to address acts of discrimination and harassment in the labour market and the workplace tends to be neglected in the career education programs which seek to change girls' choices and their sense of themselves. So, too, is the structural relationship between family work and paid work. The fact that paid work is most commonly premised and organised on the assumption of a worker free from family responsibilities attracts little attention and hence the provisions which would be necessary to rectify this attract little attention. Even the common issues of childcare, family leave, working hours and so forth tend to be down-played.

Such silences are both ideological and historical. They point to the relative conservatism of much career education for girls. And, ultimately they operate to disempower students because they keep them ignorant about the ways in which power is and has been exercised in the world of work. They give them no language (beyond stereotyping) to name it and no perception of the ways in which they might participate in institutional and structural change. Power comes to be seen as what other people have, and change comes to be seen as either the result of what other people do with their power or as the end result of many individual acts of will. The general organisation of work and the organisations within which work occurs—all their structures, rules, regulations and *modus operandi* become naturalised. To implicitly teach girls this in a time of such dramatic change in the organisation of work and training in Australia is irresponsible to say the least.

The National Action Plan for the Education of Girls, 1993-1997 argued that:

> Work education needs to acknowledge and critically examine the historical forces underlying such things as ... the influence of work bargaining processes, including trade unions, on the male and female work forces (1993, p. 29).

This was a useful beginning to a new and complimentary approach to career education for girls. Implicit in it is the recognition that girls need to be taught to be critically informed workers who are knowledgable about labour markets and labour market issues.

But what does this mean above and beyond what is already taught to girls in human capital models? Firstly it means clarifying for girls a few matters of principle. The first is that institutions are the product of history; they are not fixed or immutable; they are made and changed by people—albeit not easily or quickly. The structures of institutions and the rules that govern them represent

relationships of power and changes to them occur as result of power struggles. That women have not fared well in such power struggles leads to the second matter of principle—that horny old chestnut—the relationship between paid and unpaid work. Many labour market issues for women rise and fall as a result of this relationship. Hence girls and boys must come to grips with basic and enduring issues of childcare, working hours and family leave but they must also come to see how the world of paid work came to be structured in such a way as to (i) ignore the needs of workers (usually women) with family responsibilities, (ii) discriminate against those with such responsibilities and, indeed, (iii) exploit such responsibilities as a way of either keeping down the costs of labour in the case of employers or enhancing their own employment opportunities in the case of male workers. A path through history shows how, each time the world of work changes, women's unpaid work has shaped changes to their paid work. 'Dangerous opportunities' have frequently become lost opportunities.

The third matter of principle is that this has not always and need not necessarily be so. It is most important for girls to learn about the ways in which women have long sought to be agents in their own destiny in the paid work place—seeking to rewrite the rules in ways which work for them. Clearly the general history of feminism as a social movement is pertinent here as are the more specific struggles around issues such as maternity leave, child care, affirmative action and sexual harassment legislation and so on—there are some stirring and evocative stories on these topics. This set of principles certainly provides girls with a framework for considering the issues involved in current struggles around work; issues such as awards, flexibility, enterprise bargaining and workplace competencies.

All of this points to the absolute necessity of a longer historical view. If we are to enhance girls post-school options, we must not accept and propagate myths that history is a poor 'investment' for girls. History has implications for girls' and women's perceptions of themselves as agents or objects in the world of work. 'Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.' Traditionally, some would have said that histories of the world of work have no bearing on career education, that they belong elsewhere in the curriculum. Indeed, gender-inclusive histories of women and work have been available in the social sciences and in Australian Studies for some time. However, it has not usually been the case that these have been connected to the career education of girls. The same point applies to other curriculum areas where sociological understanding and social literacy are taught. Now that career education is so strongly encouraged to define itself more widely and to work across the curriculum, there are great opportunities available for making new, novel and powerful connections.

At this point we should say that these sorts of suggestions are not totally new either to career education per se or to career education for girls. They are just not particularly common. Coming from a small number of quarters there has been some attempt to introduce these sorts of topics into career education.

TABLE 3

Support materials for career education across the curriculum: a focus on institutional structures and practices

EXAMPLES OF UNITS OF WORK which teachers can slot into their own programs (eg. *Primary Strategies* 1988).

INTEGRATED AND SEQUENTIAL CURRICULUM (eg. *Australian Studies, The Social Literacy Project* NSW, *Writing Gender Inclusive Units in the VCE* 1989). Often the boundaries between subject areas are broken down, particularly in the primary school material.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC GUIDES to secondary sources (books) and to support material (films, music, videos) (eg. Coxsedge n.d.). Such sources provide historical and contemporary narratives about the lives and work of women from many social groupings, in many walks of life. Also included in these bibliographic guides are books which offer various recent feminist theoretical frameworks for thinking about gender, power, knowledge, culture and society. Nonetheless the conceptual apparatus most frequently drawn upon in this curriculum material is that of sex roles and sex stereotyping.

VISUAL DISPLAY MATERIALS. These include posters of women who have been significant in their various fields (eg. *Notable Women in Australia* 1989). Like historical and sociological discussions of women's experience, such images (particularly when they go beyond images of 'great women') help girls and boys to develop a more complete picture of historical and contemporary society and demonstrate to them the extent and range of women's contribution to our historical and contemporary life form. Such images also provide teachers with the opportunity to show students how selective knowledge and other forms of representation have been used to alter the visual environment in ways which make it more inclusive. In our view the purpose of this material is to offer supportive images of repressed versions of masculinity and femininity in all walks of life.

Such suggestions usually come from those people who seek to widen the scope of career education, to develop it under the rubric of work education and to establish strong links between it and other curriculum areas. For instance, in the series of booklets on the topic *Broadening Girls' Post-school Options* (1991) put out by the Education of Girls Unit of the Education Department of SA this is a strong line of argument.

The booklet on *Work Experience* makes the case that restrictive assumptions about women's domestic destiny and dependence on men are 'reflected in work practices, legislation, the media, economic and social policy and access to Social Security' (p. 5). It notes how these create barriers for women and girls and argues that the curriculum should 'examine these issues' and develop in students 'the skills and strategies for dealing with them.' Again good histories are useful here, for they show students how women and other workers have organised and the strategies they have developed to effect change 'from below' or 'from the margins' in the world of work. Of course unions are part of this story—particularly women's unions, but the ambiguous relationship of male dominated unions to women's paid and unpaid work would have to be discussed (see Fox 1991, ch. 6). It is equally relevant here to consider the contributions of groups of women activists such as the Women's Electoral Lobby. The SA booklet also makes the case that sexual and racial harassment should be dealt with as part of the school curriculum from K to 12 and that students should be taught what it is and the skills to deal with it. Their knowledge and skills on the topic should then be 'fine-tuned' for work experience and work placement.

Useful as these ideas might be, suggestions about the manner in which career education can help girls to become informed, critical and active citizens in the worlds of work should not stop there and, generally, require more consideration. Another suggestion which arose from South Australia is that schools should be places in which students learn about different and better futures and explore and rehearse them while at school. This suggests that the school can provide them with opportunities to practice critical citizenship and advocacy work. In other words, career educators who wish to give their students an understanding of the ways in which institutions' structures, rules and practices inscribe people as unequal gendered subjects would do well to consider the school as both an object of study and as an institution which provides students with the opportunity to rehearse a better future.

The other point to be made here is that career education for girls cannot treat all girls as the same. It must acknowledge their differences as well as their commonalities, but without reinscribing the inequalities and injustices associated with such differences. Again, the South Australian material is useful in pointing to the particular needs of particular groups of girls on work experience and to the ways in which work experience can be organised to ensure that these needs are attended to. For instance, the *Work Experience* booklet notes the cost difficulties for girls in poverty and the likely cultural isolation of Aboriginal girls, and points to other agencies which might be able to provide ways around these problems. Another study conducted by the Education of Girls Unit in SA (no date) focussed particularly on girls in 'low socio-economic situations' and concludes that such

girls lose confidence in their schooling because it does not provide them with sufficient information, encouragement or support to help them fulfil their strong livelihood ambitions. It also points to the fact that teachers often have stereotyped perceptions of suitable futures for these girls and channel them accordingly, and that the girls themselves often have a restricted sense of post-school possibilities, particularly with regard to tertiary study. This and other similar studies (eg. Ministry of Education of WA no date) point to the alienation experienced by many minority group parents with regard to the career education of their daughters. Such studies strongly emphasise the importance of building two-way partnerships with parents as a way of moving beyond cultural stereotyping and towards practices based on a comprehensive understanding of the differences which pertain to girls' post-school options.

A focus on culture and meaning

Those theories about the labour market and curriculum which focus on culture and meaning are concerned with the ways in which meaning, power and gender come together. They are interested in the ways in which meanings about work have been mobilised and institutionalised in ways which are oppressive for women. Their political project involves the remaking of meaning. To participate in the politics of gender is to participate in the politics of meaning-making.

Overall, a feminist post-structuralist approach to career education encourages students to read the words and the worlds of work on the basis of the following three principles of procedure. They must (i) identify the discourses that make gendered subjects in the worlds of work, (ii) identify the ways in which people work with and against these meanings to build their own identities as workers and (iii) seek to re-make meaning through participating in the politics of gender. This involves deconstruction, the development of resistant or alternative discourses and the use of negotiation skills in order to ensure the institutionalisation of meanings which reinscribe women positively. All of these are necessary skills—not easily acquired but, as a number of studies have shown, this can be done, and with primary school students too (see Davies 1993)!

Deconstruction, broadly defined, is a basic skill here and it requires a little explanation. Most of the *Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project* papers developed to support the Curriculum Statements and Profiles offer a succinct definition and the following is taken from the document developed by Francesca Kinnane (1993) for English.

> What reality does this text produce?
>
> Whose reality?...
>
> Where are the gaps and silences and contradictions?

Whose interests are served?

What are the assumptions about gender/race/class?...

How can it be challenged, criticised, transformed, resisted?

Deconstructive pedagogies designed to enhance girls' post-school options would set out to deconstruct the apparently natural organisation, naming and valuing of work in the paid work force, the home and in civic life. They would also involve the unmasking of the apparently natural but deeply political concepts through which work is understood. The separation of public and private spheres is an obvious example here.

A focus on culture and meaning with regard to women's work and girls' career education includes two beliefs about skill and merit; firstly, that there is nothing intrinsically inferior about the paid or unpaid careers that women traditionally choose and secondly that they should be more highly valued and rewarded than they are. According to this view, the problem is nothing to do with worth or skill, it is that these fields are under-valued or devalued because they are *defined* as less worthy and less skilled and as a result they are frequently poorly paid and dead end. This perception is strongly connected to unpaid work in the so-called private sphere of the home. Interpersonal skills, patience, tolerance, interest in the welfare of others, the ability to perform repetitious work, 'nimble fingers' capable of handling small and minute objects, are all seen as natural to women and not in the same category as the skill required to drive a tractor, load a truck or program a computer. The predominant concept of skill is masculine and involves training by somebody or some institution outside the home.

So how does girls' career education deal with the social construction of skill and merit with regard to women's work? The most common tendency is to remain silent on this line of argument. However, when it is accepted, a number of approaches are adopted. One approach is to assert that girls' and women's ways of being and doing are of value and should be recognised as such by girls and by others. Hence the teachers who adopt this view seek to persuade girls that those subjects which traditionally attract them do have the potential to offer new and challenging pathways to the future—including career pathways. Further, over the years, some teachers of like mind have ensured that girls' work in art, literature, photography, craft and the performing arts is put on display publicly, celebrated and rewarded. *A Statement on the Arts for Australian Schools* points to 'the ways in which women's contributions to the arts world have often been under-valued and seeks to ensure that students realise the importance of studying the work of both women and men and of questioning and of critically analysing values and attitudes in past and present historical and theoretical writing' (p. 25). Another,

not uncommon approach, is to 'denature' household work. For instance, a publication by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on *Women and Work* (1992) asks upper secondary students to undertake case studies of such unpaid work. Students are to ask household members to keep a two day diary of their activities for each hour of the day. They are then to analyse such work and to fill in a time chart for each member. These charts would reveal an inequitable distribution of household, family and emotional work and demonstrate to students the extent of such work.

Usually however, it is not career education (narrowly defined) that engages questions of meaning. More commonly it is the fields of language and literary studies and Art. *A Statement on English for Australian Schools* (1994) says in its strand on Texts that 'texts associated with the world of work, including unpaid work' are amongst the 'Every day texts' which are an expected object of study (pp. 9-10). It also encourages students to develop a 'Contextual understanding' of language. For example, to 'examine the way language influences and is influenced by human activities' (p. 33) and to appreciate that:

> the ways in which people use language both reflect and shape the values attitudes and assumptions of their socio-cultural group. This is particularly important in relation to gender, ethnicity and status as texts can shape our views on a whole range of identity issues (p. 11).

It is the subject English which has led the movement to make students critically aware of the 'gender saturated' nature of language practices (Gilbert & Rowe 1989, p. 83) in all print, audio and filmic materials and in everyday usage. The manner in which such practices historically and currently construct different and unequal life paths for girls and boys is the overarching theme, although equally important themes are the use of language in the production of dominant forms of masculinity and femininity and in the production of outmoded and asymmetric images of the family and the workplace. From the recognition's involved in the above, a range of alternative practices and resources have developed. See Table 4 for some examples of the ways in which language and literary studies have sought to rewrite the future for girls and boys.

Deconstruction is not an activity to be restricted to humanities and social science classes. The restructuring of work in Australian workplaces has raised a number of new issues for career education in both its broad and narrow sense. Given the current emphasis on competencies, skills analyses and skill audits, the opportunity has now arisen for the adoption of deconstructive practices with regard to women's and men's paid work. Teaching students to conduct gender-

inclusive analysis in these areas provides career education across the curriculum with some powerful new possibilities in fields such as science and mathematics. Another possible focus of inquiry by students is on the culture of the workplace or what Eileen Byrne (1991) calls 'institutional ecology'. Such studies would encourage students to explore the manner in which versions of femininity and masculinity are integral to many forms of work. This would lead them to consider the extent to which people gain their sense of themselves as feminine or masculine according to the work that they do on power relations between males and females.

TABLE 4

Literary studies

- Approaches and activities which encourage students to critically engage a range of 'texts'—be they fairy stories, reading schemes, girls' romances and magazines, advertising practice or the dominant literary cannon. Students are to develop what Gilbert and Rowe (1989) call 'critical reading positions'.
- Counter-sexist material (reading and library books, classroom kits) which presents alternatives to the conventional ways of representing gender which still dominate many school and other texts. (Most Equal Opportunity Resource Centres have collections of such material particularly for the junior primary grades.) Such material offers a more realistic picture of the many and varied ways in which males and females of different ethnic, class and racial backgrounds and of different sexual orientations live out their lives in their homes, their workplaces and in their leisure pursuits. By and large the emphasis is on what might be thought of as the less conventional. The idea is to represent social differences, to encourage tolerance of such differences and to discourage students' identification with misleading images.
- Bibliographies which alert teachers to the range of available literature (print, audio and filmic) produced by women which is suitable for inclusion in school syllabus. (see Allard, Keane & Lam 1988, Coxsedge nd.) Three purposes seem evident here. One is to expose students to literary productions which are more likely to embody a female perspective or to adequately engage with females' experiences, interests and concerns. Another purpose is to alert students to women's historical and on-going participation in the work of cultural production and to alert girls to the range of possible avenues of paid work in the field of cultural production (e.g. Allard & Sheanam 1985, Coxsedge nd.).

  A third purpose is to increase the involvement of women in such fields in order that cultural representations offer different gender representations

TABLE 4 CONTINUED

- The exploration of the work practices and power relationships behind various forms of cultural production. This allows students to demystify cultural products and to recognise their connections with dominant social interests.

  Alongside this view students are encouraged to produce and publish their own cultural artefacts (e.g. *1979-1985 Her Story at Brunswick TS*, Watson & Tyrrell 1986). Be they at an individual or group level, such efforts are seen to offer students, and particularly girls, a sense of self and collective empowerment.
- The development of issues based or thematic curriculum units which, while focusing on issues concerned with women and/or girls, seek to develop particular literacy and/or literary competencies. Women's work is a popular theme here.

Such studies would also encourage them to observe the extent to which such gendering of particular forms of work is an unnecessary overlay, whether it is in fact integral to the job (and in many cases it will be) and whether it helps to sustain power relations between males and females. A study of such ecologies would also help girls to understand some apparent paradoxes. For instance, why it is that gaining the qualifications doesn't necessarily get women the job and why it is that women in the professions are not in their highest ranks? Such inquiries might also make evident the role that sexual and racial harassment play in power relationships in the workplace.

It has been demonstrated time and time again that sexual and racial harassment is an exercise of power, a means of social control which is both integral to the culture of many workplaces and integral to women's subordination in the workplace. Almost invariably the perpetrators are male. This suggests that enhancing girls' post-school options, must of necessity, involve a process of re-writing what it means to be male. The educational focus needs also to be directed at boys, as fellow employees and employers, as well as partners in family, household, emotional and civic work.

Conclusion

Theories which connect education to the world of work indicate that school education, including both career and vocational education, can enhance girls' post-school options in the following ways:

i by offering education about the range of jobs available and the paths necessarily taken to gain access to specific jobs;

ii by ensuring access and success in the school subjects which either permit access to specific jobs or to further study which leads to specific jobs;

iii by offering education about the world of work (paid and unpaid), the gendered and other power relationships which form it and the ways in which change is, and can be, effected within it;

iv by helping students to develop critical understanding of the ways in which the world of work is coded by gender and the ways that this relates to power and injustice;

v by helping students to develop the attitudes, skills and capacities to confront injustices and effect change; and

vi by helping students explore the implications of all the above for their own life projects.

Notes

1 This chapter draws from Kenway, J and Willis, S with Junor, A (1995) *Critical Visions: Rewriting the Future of Education, Gender and Work*, AGPS, Corporate Communication Section, DEET, Canberra. We wish to thank Kay O'Halloran for her editorial work on earlier versions of this chapter.

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SECTION THREE

COMMENTARIES AND CONTEXTS

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: MANAGING RISK IN A RISK SOCIETY

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This paper seeks to explore one of the central theoretical concerns which has emanated from introductory research into the pathways, (via vocational education programs), which take young people into the world of work. The concepts to be explored are that of 'risk' and 'trust'. Risk and anxiety / uncertainty set against trust and (ontological) security are major concerns of educational and workplace settings in this period of reflexive (Beck 1992) or high (Giddens 1991, 1994) modernity.

Risk permeates all facets of the vocational education scene. It is recognised by governments, such as in Gude's and Honeywood's *Joint Ministerial Statement: Vocational Education and Training in Schools* (1996) which was produced for the state of Victoria. This document considers the state of the current youth labour market in which people without recognised vocational competencies are considered to be at risk of unemployment. Consequently, those students who do the specifically vocationally orientated courses are frequently considered by the school to be those who are 'at risk'. Even if there is no differentiation amongst students and the whole cohort is engaged in a dual recognition or dual accreditation program a driving force is the reduction of the risks young people may face when they have to enter the 'real' world (Dompietro 1996). But risks are not confined to the students in schools. Teachers and subjects are deemed to be at risk due to the influx of vocational education programs. In some schools traditional subjects like Geography and English Literature have disappeared because of the declining numbers of students due to the newer vocational programs (see Keating 1996). Similarly the teachers of these traditional subjects are also 'at risk' as their subjects disappear from the curriculum and there are suggestions of them being retrained or even being made redundant to the needs of the school.

Risk is also manifest from the employer's perspective as she/he takes on an unknown quantity and quality in the student who has been placed in the workplace on work experience or work placement. Will the student be

conscientious and reliable? Will he or she fit in with the culture of the firm? Will the whole process by a frustrating time-consuming occupation of 'mothering' the students? Or will the students provide some useful attributes and qualities to the business which may be helpful in selecting potential recruits (Watkins, 1988; Dompietro, 1996). The next section of the paper will briefly outline the environment in which young people seek to enter the world of work. This paper will then focus on the theoretical arguments which have been put forward in Beck's *Risk Society* (1992). Next, it will take Beck's and Giddens' recent discussions of the contemporary attempts by society to engender new conditions for the gaining of trust and security through the management of risk. The focus here is the management of risk through the introduction of vocational education programs into schools, TAFE and the workplace. In these settings, we must see management and trust as intimately connected, with an overall intellectual understanding of the risks society and individual young people face, the strategies educationalists take to respond to the 'risk society', and the willingness of employers to contribute to a reduction in risk to individual students. Central to risk reduction, and the gaining of trust and security, is the creation of access points. Points where there are interconnections between young people, vocational education 'experts' and the world of work. It is at such intersections that trust can be built up and eventually perhaps, maintained. It is at these access points that vocational education programs are to be found.

Setting the scene

The calamitous position of youth unemployment and underemployment is a major dimension of the current school and work debate (Freeland 1996, Sweet 1996, 1995a). Sweet, for instance, in his recent paper 'All of their Talents?: Policies and programs for fragmented and interrupted transitions' (1995b) outlines statistically, the uncertainties and risks young people are exposed to in their pathway to the workplace. He is however also prescriptive in looking at the future and ways that fragmented learning paths and new training skills may be brought together. Here, for instance, Sweet draws on the work of The Hunter Labour Co-op and the 'Youth Opportunities' scheme in Sweden. Sweet nevertheless is pungent in his analysis of the increasing vulnerability, and risk facing young people who do not try to enter full time education but seek to enter the labour market. Sweet (1995, p. i) points out that:

a The chances of a teenager who is not in full-time education not being in full-time work have risen from around one in four in 1985 to nearly one in two in 1995.

b Casual part-time work, combinations of full-time and part-time work, spells of job seeking, and work for multiple employers are now the norm for a significant number of young people after they leave school. Full-time work for a full year with one employer now seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

c Young people are marginalised from the mainstream of employment, education and training in several ways. Firstly, there is **unemployment.** Wanting a job and not being able to find one is the most common cause. Although Sweet argues that it now accounts for only around half of those who are marginalised there are statistical problems. He suggests that formally measured unemployment is becoming an increasingly unreliable measure of the number of young people who are **at risk** after they leave school. Secondly, Sweet points out that young people are marginalised through solely relying on **casual part-time work**. Those students who do not have full time work normally rely on jobs that provide only a few hours of poorly paid part-time work each week. This trend has been rising steadily during the 1990's. In fact it has '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 (1995b, p. 6). Lastly, there is the problem of **dropping out** of the system. Sweet indicates that one in five have 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 can be partly seen as 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 (1995b 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 include working class students, students with disabilities and indigenous people.

Freeland (1996) in a recent conference paper also identifies the concept of risk as being pertinent to the transition of young people into the adult world. He points out that in four years from 1989-1993 teenage males in full-time employment fell from 254,600 to 140,900, while teenage females lost 98,600 full-time job opportunities. However, teenage males have been somewhat protected by the

apprenticeship system. Freeland shows that persistent gender based labour market segmentation has seen males hold approximately 90 per cent of apprenticeships. Working from the ABS Labour Force statistics, in similar fashion to Sweet (1995b, 1996), Freeland identifies three categories which consist of those who are not in full time education and who are unemployed; those who are not in full time education and who are not in the labour force; and those who are not in full time education and who are employed part-time. Students in the last category are considered to be at 'potential' risk, while those in the first two categories are considered to be at 'grave' risk. Freeland argues that risk is constructed through the transition from childhood to adulthood where it 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. As such, the stage of life identified as youth should be seen not as a discrete or distinct period with a clear cut beginning and end rather as a process: a process of simultaneously 'un-becoming' a child and becoming an adult (1996, p. 7).

Using this argument as his basis, Freeland goes on to examine this process in light of the collapse of the teenage labour market. He concludes that:

> The long term structural collapse of the teenage full-time labour market from the late 1960s has severely 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).

For Freeland a solution to the 'at risk' problem facing young people would be to identify and quantify the multi-factor inequalities which reflect socio-economic and socio-cultural differences and divisions through which young people's life course choices are structured.

However, in contrast to earlier decades, the current alarm, indicated, for instance, by two recent volumes of *Unicorn* (vol. 22, no. 1&2, 1996) devoted to Vocational Education, seems to reflect the growing uncertainties and anxieties related to the changing nature of society. This is termed by various authors as reflexive modernity (Beck 1992), high modernity (Giddens 1991), post-modernity (Hinkson 1992) or post-fordism (Kenway ed 1994).

Such uncertainties and anxieties, relating to the intersection of education and work, do not only pertain to high-consequence national risks for young people such as the overuse of drugs, homelessness or even suicide, but also impinge on the local, family problems associated with youth being unemployed. The problems of low self esteem; of being at a 'loose end', of seemingly being rejected by the adult world, of being continually out of money when compared to friends in work.

To analyse these anxieties and uncertainties of the young, against the backdrop of the changing conditions of modernity, Ulrich Beck's risk-society theory is utilised alongside the also important elaborations of risk set out by Anthony Giddens (Giddens 1990, 1991). However, because of the shortness of this paper Beck's risk-society theory will be the major focus of the theoretical discussion.

The concept of risk society

Beck is concerned with the shift from a classical industrial society to a new self-endangering civilisation which he terms 'risk society'. In this process the idea of progress has come under close scrutiny and the politics of policy-making have been transformed. By risks Beck refers to two aspects. Firstly, he refers to the physical hazards that are threatening life on this planet. Things such as pollutants, radioactivity, chemicals in the food chain etc. These risks are seen as not merely the side effects of progress in the modern world. They are progress! Secondly, risks are now being fostered by social and cultural insecurities. The world of modernity has brought new freedoms and with it-freedoms at work, at home and in society generally. An infinite range of courses of action have appeared to open themselves to young people as the traditional socialising agencies of society weaken as agencies of social reproduction. The result, Beck argues, is a manifest increase in the level of risk for all. This gives rise to the risk society. However, these freedoms also bring with them uncertainties and risks, especially where young people have had traditional values and linkages eroded from them and where the future holds many alluring choices, many of which are, in fact, impossible. In this way, Beck suggests that in the risk society, life becomes a biographical project, with increased choice and autonomy accompanied by increased risk factors. Nevertheless choice, for most, continues to be constrained by such structuring effects as class, gender, race, ethnicity and geography.

At the core of Beck's critique is that classical industrial society was chiefly concerned with the distribution of goods such as wealth and income while risk society is concerned with the distribution of uncertainties or risks such as job insecurity, underemployment and unemployment. In this way Beck claims that

from many positions it can clearly be seen that these risks outweigh the benefits which might occur from the 'juggernaut' (Giddens 1991) of unconstrained economic growth. Differing from the post-modernists who emphasise culture and language, Beck maps out the landscape of the evolving modern society through the use of techno-political economy. Thus Beck argues that:

> Questions of the development and employment of technologies (in the realms of nature, society and personality)are being eclipsed by questions of the political and economic 'management' of the risks of actually or potentially utilised technologies--discovering, administering, acknowledging, avoiding or concealing such hazards with respect to specifically defined horizons of relevance. The promise of security grows with the risks and destruction and must be reaffirmed over and over again to an alert and critical public through cosmetic or real interventions in the techno-economic development (1992, pp. 19-20).

Accordingly, Beck's argument implies that the growing intervention of vocational education programs is a response to an increasingly concerned public over the risks their 15-19 year olds confront in the face of contemporary changes in society. In this situation Beck points out that:

> 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 industrialisation process itself* (1992, pp. 23-24).

The central aspect of this approach is the concept of risk which is defined as 'a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself' (Beck 1992, p. 21). This break introduced by modernity, is characterised by two forms of modernisation which he describes as 'classical' versus 'reflexive' modernisation (Beck, 1992 p.11) Traditional way of thinking about and pathways into the job market through ' the axes of gender, family and occupation' (p. 11) are coming under stress, giving way, now to a new form of risk society which is daily becoming more evident. As evidence increasingly, clearly, occurs, economic and productivity discourse, through reflexive

modernity, comes overtly into the public sphere so that 'with a reflexive modernisation public risk consciousness and risk conflicts' (p. 161) will eventually lead to protest against blind growth.

Such growth has resulted in inequalities which are increasingly evident in an 'individualised' form. The result, according to Beck, is increased market dependency and new forms of social control. In the workplace, in the context of the industrial labour process, Beck argues that labour has been 'destandardised' through such processes as automation and spatial deconcentration. This has resulted in a 'generalisation of employment insecurity' (Beck p. 143). In this instance, once more, modernisation has undermined one of its own foundations as industrial society- the full-time, wage-labour system organised in a single location, comes under threat. Thus we have labour being made more flexible, that is, functionally, numerically and geographically flexible. Jobs come and go, appear and disappear, depending on the season, the time of year, week or the whims of an employer who may decide to go off-shore, or subcontract operations on a grander scale. In this scenario, Beck acknowledges the gender implications:

> Women may face particular threats in the future. Because of the individualisation process, on the one hand, they have extricated themselves from the traditional network of support offered by the family...On the other hand their position in the labour market is especially uncertain and the percentage of unemployed women is known to be much higher than that of men, in spite of a good deal of under reporting (1992, p. 93).

Beck, in discussing the changing nature of the workplace, tends to lean toward Piore and Sabel's (1984) analysis of work. Thus he takes on board the Proudhonian associational socialism espoused especially by Charles Sabel (see Watkins 1994) where individuals aggregate and disaggregate as the work situation ebbs and flows in a fluid motion. Beck argues that reflexive modernisation undermines the class structure and alters the rigid Tayloristic hierarchical order evident in many workplaces. Industrial society is structured through social classes while the risk society is individualised. Individuals are cast adrift in this swirling risk society as old bonds no longer provide the creation of identity and biography and the work place fades as a source of self identity and self esteem. Therefore, individualisation is a risk—with freedom from old constraints generating new uncertainties. Who am I? Who is in charge? What is my place in this world? In this sense, within limits, we can seek to construct our own biography.

While the fading of class may be overstated by Beck, he is correct to rightly indicate that risk society does indeed produce new conflicts of interest and new communities of the endangered (p.47). Indeed, the important point is raised that risk and class positions *overlap* on a national and international scale (p.41). Here the 'communities of threat' are formed partly by environmental risks and partly by the existing divisions of social class, gender, race, and ethnicity (p. 41).

Managing risk! Trust and risk

Vocational educational programs present to students in a school what seems to be a chance to grab at the 'real world'. It offers them the prospect of partaking in what is perceived as ordinary day to day life. Although this varies with the individuality, which Beck (1992) pointed out, becoming more and more prevalent in high modernity, the vocational education programs allow a sense of reduced uncertainty by offering a taste of what is perceived as 'normal'. The sense of risk reduction and lessening of anxiety involves, what (Giddens 1984, p. 50) terms as 'an ontological security, expressing an autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines'. Ontological security provides trust and security upon which people hope to base their day to day life, it provides young people with the sense of security of partaking in trusted, everyday, taken-for-granted routines. These routines are exemplified to the young people by their observation of adults in the workplace going daily through their everyday practices. Such observations foster a feeling of trust and security inherent in a sense of continuity of being. Within vocational education programs, the sustaining framework of ontological security is deeply ingrained by the family and the local community, it is natural and proper for young people to enter the workplace after school. The prospect of gaining a position through work experience or work placement, engenders feelings of belongingness and trust.

However, where ontological security is under risk or strain, there appears likely to be an emotional affiliation with a leader figure, be it a principal, careers or work experience teacher (see Hodkinson 1995). The need for identification with a leader figure, which often appears in vocational education programs gives rise to a strong affiliation with an 'in-group' which is coupled with an aversion to an 'out-group'. Thus we can see in a number of schools the 'in-group' doing courses which will appear to vocationally prepare them rather than doing out-group subjects such as Geography, English Literature or Ancient History. These latter subjects, and similar ones to them, seem to offer little security and low levels of trust in being prepared for the 'real' world of work. Vocational education programs provide a supportive mechanism to maintain trust between student and teachers and the outside world. 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). Indeed, later, (1990) he asserts that:

> *the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanism of trust in abstract systems*, especially trust in expert systems. In conditions of modernity, the future is always open, not just in terms of the ordinary contingency of things, but in terms of the reflexivity of knowledge in relation to which social practices are organised. This counterfactual, future -orientated character of modernity is largely structured by trust vested in abstract systems-which by its very nature is filtered by the trustworthiness of established expertise (1990, pp. 83-84).

Thus the vocational education structure provides a future vision for young people of trust in the ability to find employment when school is left.

In considering the concepts of trust, sense of security and risk reduction Giddens draws on the work of Goffman saying 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 by Giddens in his analysis of Willis' *Learning to Labour* (1977). The oppositional modes of behaviour of the lads to the traditional curricular leads them to see work as the real world and to go and seek it. As Giddens argues:

> They want financial independence which work will provide: at the same time however, they have no particular expectations about any other types of reward that work might offer. The aggressive, joking culture which they have developed within the school *milieu* actually quite strongly resembles that of the shop floor culture of the work situations into which they tend to move. Hence 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).

In this way the 'lads achieve' ontological security in being able to find some work through the maintenance of an inner solidarity with a group's behaviour, ideals and identity (Giddens 1984, p. 60). Willis indicates the acceptance of a working class culture linking the idea of stability with the workplace produces a sense of trust:

> Trust, it might be said, is a device for stabilising interaction. To be able to trust another person is to be able to rely upon that person to produce a range of anticipated responses. Goffman shows that there is a significant sense in which we tend to trust strangers or chance acquaintances in the settings of modern social life. Of course, we also characteristically in a deeper fashion trust certain individuals with whom we are particularly close. Trust in such instances influences and orders what we do in co-present interaction with those individuals, but equally importantly by the same token it orders our relations with them across a diversity of contents (Giddens 1987, p. 136).

Giddens (1984, p. 54) stresses that the sense of trust expressed in the quote alone does not occur without conflict or strain. Indeed, it can be said to function within a backdrop of anxiety, uncertainty and a sense of risk leading to a situation where masculine, manual labour, is considered preferable to the conformity and effeminacy associated with the 'brain work' demanded by the school's traditional curricular. As Willis (1977, p. 16) points out there is a conception of the inevitability of certain kinds of work already forming in the culture of secondary students; 'the apparent timelessness and inevitability of industrial organisation... the hardness and inevitability of industrial work'. Willis goes on to argue that vocational education offers more scope than education proper. Because they are not so constrained by the traditional curricular:

> careers officers deal directly with the real world, with inequality, and the role of knowledge and qualifications in the distribution of job opportunities...Certainly they are frequently more sympathetic to such as 'the lads'...This different form of attunement to oppositional variants of working class culture is one of the usual tension between school and careers officers...(For careers teachers) in order to contribute to longer structural change, and to a basic change in the opportunities and quality of work faced by working class kids, it is necessary to organise more politically in professional and other bodies on behalf of the forces which are uncovered and examined in the short term (1977, pp. 186-188).

However, in a later paper (1986), Willis warns of vocational education being handed over to industry. He argues that' it is clear to me that the working class and oppressed interest is for the education system to be systematically involved in processes addressed to changing rather than reproducing the existing class, gender and race divisions of labour. In this light it is clearly retrograde to hand over chunks of post 16 education...to industry-the very site of these divisions'

(p. 167). More recently, Mac an Ghaill, (1996), arguing from Willis, points out that for the young unemployed in the 1990's, they 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).

It might well be argued, therefore, that any stability inherent in the inequality structures within contemporary capitalism depends at least partly on the degree to which these beliefs are disseminated and become the predominant way in which young people interpret and react to their environment. Thus students, in such periods of uncertainty and risk which Beck and Giddens allude to, come know and interpret their world in a way which is related to the power of those who control both material and mental production and how ontological security within these areas is presented and disseminated as social 'reality'.

Conclusion

This paper has used Beck's risk-society theory and the concept of trust to deal with the growing alarm at the fate of young people in society. The analysis of these relations of production and the economic anxieties is set against the background of a changing conditions of modernity. In using the theoretical approaches of Giddens and Beck, we must be aware of the various levels of risk associated with the pathways of young people into the world of work. In particular, schools have the task of fostering a sense of security in young people through programs such as vocational education to alleviate any pervasive sense of insecurity or risk.

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REFRAMING THE DISCOURSE OF SKILL

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My approach to vocational issues is through a somewhat different route than many of those in this collection. I teach in a faculty of education, though my background is in sociology and my focus is not on schools but on issues of work and learning in non-compulsory settings, whether institutional community or work-place based.

My remarks are part of a larger project of trying to put notions like skills and vocational learning back into a broader and more social framework, so they can help us think about the problem of learning in the context of a collective social need to sustain our selves and our communities over a life-time.

As a point of departure, I would like to restate the obvious, which is that the notion of skill and skills training has traditionally been used to name quite narrowly defined forms of learning, and has taken for granted a highly functionalist view of the aims and purposes of instruction. While most other forms of learning are the subject of great and heated theoretical debates about moral purposes, social choices, professional visions, and contested outcomes, 'skill acquisition' is usually seen to lie outside of all that, as the vocabulary itself clearly suggests. Thus invoking the discourse of skill tends to foreclose broad debate on what learning might be about.

My view is that this distinction between skilling and education is highly ideological, by which I mean that it tends to serve particular interests while at the same time concealing that it is doing so. It serves the status quo by excluding from the realm of critical debate the very kind of learning that are most accessible to the largest percentage of the population over the course of their life-times. Learning for, in and about working life is a rich and complex tapestry of activities that shapes the mind, imagination, and identity of almost all young people and adults at some time in their lives. Yet we mostly fail to examine these kinds of learning, to ask how these experiences shape not only our workplaces but our identities, our lives and communities. Through this omission we not only short change those people who have always been least well served by the education system, but we also miss the opportunity to examine work-related learning as an important site of cultural production.

I am interested in reworking the notion of skill partly as an academic project, and partly as an activist. These are two quite different moments, competing halves of my passion for work in this area, and sometimes I feel myself caught between them. Why caught? Because there is, on one hand, a growing array of theoretical resources in academia—on work, culture and identity—that I find very suggestive for thinking about 'skilll' from a social perspective (see e.g. Casey 1995, James *et al*, 1997). On the other hand, there are traditions of both scholarship and activism concerned precisely with working class learning, though too much of it has focused on white male experience (e.g. Hopkins 1985). But these currents rarely intersect, nor even speak in the same language. (For notable exceptions, see Simon *et al*, 1991, Kincheloe 1995.) So I often feel a bit stranded, on a small island between the currents, calling out toward distant shores, my voice disappearing into the wind. Maybe some readers share my sense of this dilemma.

I want to explore briefly a couple of different conceptualisation's of skill that are part of contemporary public life. I think it is important to do so because the concept of skill has become such a powerful social force—reaching into the fabric of social life in a way it would have been hard to imagine a decade ago. The political forces of the day are making use of the concept in ways that are central to the neo-liberal reform agenda. The language of skill is central to the new conceptual currency through which we are invited to understand our world and our options for action, as individuals, as professionals and as a society. For academics, our role as theorists, and sometimes as architects of opposition, gives us the opportunity to examine this language and the social relations it both shapes and is shaped by.

So, in the brief space that remains here I am going to try to comment on two different moments in the contemporary discourse of skill. First, I'll start with what I call 'popular' or common sense notions of skill and contrast that briefly with the kinds of critical scholarship which has started to challenge those popular understandings over the last decade. Secondly, I will address the 'reappropriation' of the concept of skills by employers in recent years, and point to some quite fundamental and disturbing issues that are raised by this shift, but which remain mostly unexamined. I will do little more than raise these issues, here, and invite you to consider with me how we might promote awareness and debate about them from our various locations across the educational community.

Popular concepts of skill

In popular language, the concept of skill appears to name something almost tangible, something that individuals can 'have', or hopefully acquire, and use in

our lives. We take it to name something we know how to do, and from which we expect to benefit in the labour market. The more of it we 'have', the better off we expect to be. As individuals and groups, we have 'owned' skill in this way, and have exchanged it for wages and authority in the workplace. Skill designations have been the basis for job and occupational classifications, industrial awards and agreements, all of which have aimed to stabilise what workers could expect not only to 'do' in their working lives, but also to 'get' in exchange for their skills seeAustralian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU 1992). All this has a positive connotation, and has for some years appeared to be a fairly stable arrangement, even the natural order of things.

This faith in skill as an individual asset that you and I can acquire and benefit from is what politicians are trading on in today's policy rhetoric. It underlies the power of the plethora of policy initiatives—not only education and training policies per se, but also industrial adjustment schemes and social services reforms—that offer skills acquisition as a partial answer to the economic and social woes of the 1980's and 90's. I will return to these issues in a moment.

But first, putting a more theoretical hat on for a moment, it is important to see that this common sense understanding of skill turns out to be neither natural nor stable, but an historically specific social artefact. It is heavily shaped by the craft and trades tradition of the industrial era in which a great deal of knowledge of tools and materials was in the control of at least some segments of the male working population. But these arrangements have continued to dominate our theorising of work and skill almost to the present day. In the last decade, we have begun to learn not to romanticise and universalise any of this history. We have learned instead to see skill as a term that creates and preserves social divisions, moulding the dynamics of power and privilege that divide working people from one another, women from men, people of colour from whites, young from old north from south, etc. (Cockburn & Ormond 1993, Westwood & Bhachu 1988). So little by little, we have learned to see how the concept of skill is used as an ideological device which is part of organising the social relations of production (Jackson 1991).

I take this theorised notion of the concept of skill, as an 'unnatural' construct, as my point of departure in my remarks. It permits us to hold at bay the policy rhetoric with which we are constantly bombarded and gives us the tools to examine exactly what is meant, what is being achieved, and by whom, when this concept is invoked.

Indeed, while politicians continue to trade on positive connotations attached to the concept of skill inherited from an earlier era, we need to see that production relations themselves are changing quite rapidly. If we look carefully at the social relations subsumed in and expressed by the term skill in today's

labour markets, we will see that it can no longer be taken to stand for the same arrangement of opportunities and distribution of benefits that it did even a decade ago. Given this shift, of which I will give only the briefest summary below, the ideological character of the term skill is greatly intensified, as is its potential to work against, rather than for, the interests of working men and women.

Employers' concepts of skill

The central refrain of employers for over two decades has been about changing skill requirements. For many years, these changes were attributed to the impact of electronic technology. More recently, the focus has been on changes related to new methods of organising production and new theories of management. In all of these cases, employers are seeking a changing division of labour between people and equipment, a new approach to the organisation of work particularly within the production workforce, and a new approach to the distribution of both skill designations and the benefits which are attached to them (see Littler 1994, Brown & Lauder 1992).

These shifts in theory and practice are marked by a whole new generation of language related to work-places and labour markets. The vocabulary is by now entirely familiar to those interested in work-places: human resource development, flexible production, employee participation, quality assurance, and a host of related terms. Collectively, these terms identify a regime in which human labour is meant to be more effectively developed and efficiently deployed than in past. Individual workers are seen as 'resources' to be more intensively and comprehensively mobilised in the service of corporate goals: body movements more systematically deployed, capacity to think more broadly harnessed, capacity to learn more consistently utilised, attitudes more carefully managed, loyalties more firmly secured, etc. All aspects of individual performance come to be measured against value added, which means basically contributions to profits. In addition, the work of supervision, inspection, trouble shooting and surveillance are integrated into production work through competitive team work and quality assurance initiative (Parker & Slaughter 1995).

Significantly, the capacity for these functions is introduced as new skills: communication skills, problem solving skills, leadership skills, team skills, etc. Within this new regime, the concepts of skills and skills training have a very central place in organising and mobilising consent. Individuals are promised a myriad forms of news skills training, skills upgrading, multi-skilling, skills-based career paths, and greater access to training and re-training in order to keep their skills up to date and to keep a place in the labour market. These are all very attractive promises indeed. But through this new lexicon, the concept of skill

comes to stand for any aspect of how the employer wants the work to be performed, including the work of safeguarding the employer interests.

This is a quick and sketchy tour, but brings me to the pivotal point in the general analysis I am trying to introduce, if not entirely develop, here. That is, these new arrangements in which the employer redefines skills in his (sic) own interests serve to invert the former organisation of entitlements underlying the notion of skill. That is, no longer are skills designations enshrined in occupational titles and job classifications that define and protect the workers' entitlements as well as the employers' obligations. Today, such forms of organisation which emphasise workers' entitlements are referred to as 'structural rigidity's' (e.g. Heenan 1995). In the new regime, workers are meant to have skills, not occupations; abilities are meant to be recognised through competencies rather than classifications. The difference of course is that these new forms of skill and competency are now seen to be subject to much more unilateral organisation and control by the employer. We might say that the employer has re-appropriated the property rights over the capacity of the worker to labour.

I am aware that this may be an argument which runs particularly strongly against the grain here in Australia, where the popular belief in universal benefits from a national system of skills recognition runs very deep. That is a discussion much too broad to undertake here. But I would argue that the underlying dynamics which I am trying to identify are nevertheless relevant to the process of industrial reform in Australia, however much we might want to argue about degrees. My basic point is that in the era of human resource development, the ideal of a 'skilled workforce' is one from which protective designations which favour individual entitlements have been removed. They are removed because of their power to restrict the rights of the employer to utilise the workers' capacity to labour and because they have the effect of directing too large a share of the benefits from skilled status to the worker rather than to the employer. Thus the new regime of skill is actually an inversion of the popular concept of skill with which I began.

A similar inversion is happening with the notion of skills training, despite heroic efforts on the part of the union movement over the last decade. Rather than investing workers with new capabilities which bring new entitlements, opportunities for learning are increasingly organised in ways that increase the subordination of the worker to the wishes of the employer, by facilitating job rotations, team work, and various forms of work intensification, whether or not wage rises or other benefits accrue (Jackson 1992). In fact we know that even where wage rises and other benefits have been promised in exchange for skills training, success in making that bargain stick has been very unevenly distributed across the workforce, with women and other workers with poor bargaining power

seeing the least benefit (see Probert 1992). So once again, the skills regime plays out as a vehicle for preserving and even intensifying the uneven distribution of the benefits of work.

I am well aware that all of these changes in the regimes of skill formation are justified in the public eye, in Australia as well as Canada, in terms of the necessity to compete for capital investment in a global marketplace. Governments of all political stripes are going down this path, assuring their citizens that these adjustments are the terms of prosperity for all players in the new world order (see Hirst & Thompson 1996). All of that is a topic much too big for this paper. But I mention the presence of this global rationale specifically to point out that it reinforces rather than detracts from the importance of the analysis I am proposing. The question of who benefits, and how, from the new regimes of skill formation is of interest not only to Australians but to working men and women throughout the so-called global economy. It unites us, across borders, in the search for a more humane, as well as a more prosperous world order.

Questions for an alternative theory

So, to sum up, I am arguing here that, contrary to our fondest hopes and beliefs, and indeed our collective efforts, the arena of skills formation has become a vehicle for the further encroachment of economic rationalism on our lives. Whereas in the past, the concept of skill was a tool through which working people claimed entitlements from employers, now it is increasingly being used to produce the opposite effect: to expand the rights of employers to make demands on workers, with or without recognition. It is a small but powerful change in the dynamics of working life, and not one that we can afford to ignore. It begins to turn the tables on democratic rights won by industrialised workers over more than a century. Taking action to challenge these developments requires a broad strategy for all forms of education and training related to working life and a plausible vision about alternatives.

The search for alternatives is daunting in the face of the compelling rhetoric of 'competitiveness'. The place to start is perhaps with contrasting the new imperatives of 'value-added' production with the basic principles of democracy and social justice. How does skills training fit into these competing viosions? The questions that come to mind are broad but suggestive.

From an industrial perspective, we might ask, what new kind of a framework for learninf entitlements would acknowledge and protect the rights and well-being of individuals in the context of new flexible forms of work organisation? Unions everywhere are struggling with these issues every day, with too little time

and too few resources. A few principles are apparent. For example, it is clear that a democratic vision for skills formation starts with a vision of workplace, industry and society that puts people at its centre. In that case, different things would count as important. Production skills would be redefined if well-being of the workforce counted as one form of 'value' to be added. Communication skills would be redefined if democratic work practices were the common goal. Management skills would change if real distribution of power and wealth were the common workplace objective. These are not new ideas: communes and cooperatives have struggled for years to balance these demands (seeMellor, M. *et al* 1998). There is a wealth of experience and expertise available about how to do it, if we chose to make it relevant.

Similarly, from a public policy perspective we might ask, what kind of public policy regime, either nationally or meta-nationally (e.g. trading blocks), would put skills formation at the service of democratic citizenship and community prosperity as well as building a robust global economy? Here there is not so much experience to draw on, but still, a few basic principles can be identified. Education and training would need to be moved across the ledger and counted as an investment not an expenditure, for governments as well as firms. Training programs would need to be targeted at local scale community development efforts as much as at the needs of existing employers. Local community spokespersons would need to have a voice in setting vocational education and training policy.

From a community perspective, we might ask how can issues of education and training assist citizens collectively to get issues of human dignity and quality of life onto the international agenda? How can even forms of political and economic organisation be held accountable to social values? How can measurements of economic growth be made responsive to activity in local communities rather than activity on the floor of the stock exchange?

All of this is rather tentative and suggestive, and some would say utopian. I do not have many answers, though I remind myself daily that finding answers starts with identifying questions. But I hope I am beginning to make visible one simple connection. That is, the discourse of skill that we use to guide our action holds within it a powerful vision of the future. It names not only how we will work but how we will live. It is a social choice, and one that we make by our consent as well as our resistance. It is a choice that deserves to be broadly debated—among theorists and activists, among teachers and learners, in our workplaces and communities. We all have a stake in how it shapes our future.

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LEARNING ABOUT POVERTY, DISADVANTAGE AND JUSTICE

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The fundamental issue which we have to address in Vocational Education, one we are very reluctant to address, is the distribution of opportunities to engage in the exciting new pathways mentioned in the first part of this book.

Whether you are discussing a traditional school pathway into Vocational Education or via VCE into the universities, whatever course you decide is important is obviously balanced by a sense of pragmatism as well as a sense of vision. But I think it is a pity that we do not in a sense address the fundamental question of poverty. Unfortunately, my experience with a lot of teachers is that they still have a view that poverty is an individual attribution; teachers resort to what I call 'inner-psychic' explanations as to why certain students do not perform, when in actual fact they should consider more carefully systemic understanding of why the poor are poor. That is the first point I would like to make.

That is not to decry the great dedication and motivation that people have. I think that is pretty obvious. Nevertheless I think it is important for us to address the structural, the socio political dimension. In other words, we have to become politically aware (without becoming political animals there is a distinction between these two—a political animal is someone who opens the door for you and trips you as you go in). Being politically and economically aware means that you are aware of all the stake-holders, whether they be industry, educators or the government. We have to, in some sense, place our programs in context to get the best result for our schools.

Pathways to employment for disadvantaged young people are pretty difficult but support can make a big difference. This is basically our experience in the Brotherhood. Disadvantaged young people will find it hard to break into work, except for work with certain firms. Some firms have addressed issues associated with poverty. Take the Body Shop for example They have gone to the extreme of even accepting street kids and putting them into training and subsequent jobs. Perhaps this is predominantly because the Body Shop is led by a woman and therefore the company has a consciousness and wholeness about the existence and the interconnectedness of us as human beings and therefore they were

prepared to take a risk with that kid and say, "Yes we will give a break to this kid, in terms of the training and placement in a job".

As a result of this approach came programs at our Employment Action Centre, which is basically a pathway for those long term unemployed people; many have been placed into jobs. Our Body Shop Linked Access Traineeship Program for example, has a 93% success rate. The reason I think we were successful is that we negotiated with industry and they actually began to understand the picture; they understood where these kids were coming from; that they could not automatically make assumptions about people participating. People like those at the Body Shop have been almost exemplary in terms of taking that risk with the young people over 1993—1995.

We encountered a number of issues doing the training program. For example, some were homeless so we had to find accommodation for them; some of them were innocent casualties of grave domestic violence so we had to somehow help them to rebuild their self image. helping them see that they were worthwhile, that they are able to form primary relationships. Many were early school leavers; they were leaving school before Year 12. We had about 60 of those students and we found that by and large the barriers were in a sense the socio-economic status of their family. They often related with what we would describe as anti social behaviour in terms of family abuse and alcoholism, even drug addiction. In a sense we had to be working through those issues and still trying to make this person presentable to, you could say, their prospective employer. To some extent I think we succeeded, but what worries me with the many other traineeship programs that are running, is that obviously industry is going to pick the cream so what happens to all those other kids?

We should not delude ourselves that this sort of support and training is all that is needed. The other illusion I think that we live under (and it is a delusion perhaps more than illusion) is the fact that we have just under one million people unemployed today chasing something like 53,000 jobs. Now how do we, in a sense, present the world of a market place to young people who already intuitively know that there is not a job? That does not mean, that therefore we are not going to do anything with them. I am just asking as a question: why do we continue with the delusion about training alone when in actual fact there are not the jobs to go around? I think that is a lie to tell people. I would rather people say, "Look, there may be a possibility of a job but the facts are these, there are one million people unemployed at the moment chasing 53,000 jobs. That is the situation at the moment in Australia".

Then we ask the question, "What is actually happening?" To jump to another level: 'Is this what is meant by the globalisation of our economies?' To jump again: 'Who are these people operating in the global market?' They are not

national governments; they are international conglomerates who make money all over the world and therefore allocate resources and even training budgets in the light of where they are going to go.

The consequence of this globalisation, or at least the belief in it, has been that national governments like Australia, Britain, Canada, and even the US, where normally you could see that a fair return of the wealth of the country would go into things like education, health, and housing, are shrinking the size of government. In a sense they are being deliberately hard because they feel they have no other choice in the matter, because they have no money. The money coming in from what we would call the corporate world is actually getting less and less because of the globalisation that is taking place.

Of course we could address this further but that again is not something within our range of competence or our expertise. It is basically a political decision: How do we deal with what I would describe as the drain of our legitimate rights as certain goods and monies go overseas? Now I do not want to present myself as some sort of xenophobic ultra nationalist. I am just pointing to the fact that we are actually losing legitimate tax money that should be used in this country.

My point is that we must present a realistic picture as well as give hope. We are just bleating if we keep on saying 'this is how things ought to be'. We also have to say 'this is how things are'. I think most of us in education are very good at seeing both how things ought to be and now things are. I think the great teachers have done good work with people, they are the ones who actually know how things are and somehow can push beyond it and say, "Yes let's go with the opportunities given to us". I am not in any way trying to decry the work being done; I hope you have got that message. All I am saying is that it would be much better if we took a more considered 'helicopter' view where we can inform our students, and explain the present situation adequately.

How can we locate our efforts in a broader context? The process I would suggest centres on that old fashioned word that seems to be disappearing, called 'empowerment'. I know that empowerment is a word used to cover a multitude of sins, but I'm very specific when I use the word 'empowerment'. It has to have four components, and the four components which came out of the Brotherhood Family Centre Project were: first, that the students and the staff engaged in the learning process have power over information. Second, that they have to have power over the decision making process. Third, that they have to have power over their relationships. Fourth, however limited the resources, they have to have power over money or other resources.

When I work with some schools who have taken that challenge up in South Australia, a state where I worked for a number of years with Aboriginal people, it is remarkable what some of the schools have done. For example, they have taken

audits in terms of the staff by saying, "On a continuum from zero to ten how do you rate yourself in terms of power over information in your organisation?. How would you rate yourself in the relationships? How would you rate yourself in the decision making? How would you rate yourself in the resources?"

It is amazing—some principals who feel they are very enlightened are surprised when the staff are giving points like 2, 4, 3, 5, when they actually generally believed they were being very participative. Now, to give them their due, they said, "Right what are the processes then required for that so you can actually measure it and gauge it?" The same things arise in terms of the curriculum, or the pedagogy being presented: how far are the students being empowered in terms of understanding the terrain they are in and the terrain they are going into?

I believe that this principle of empowerment in learning is so important, particularly now. In some senses the Pauline Hanson phenomenon is really a phenomenon of uncertainty which is fear because people do not know where they are going. And if people do not know where they are going, they can only latch onto something residual, something in the past. If teachers do not know where education is going, then all they can hang onto is residual past. We do poorly by our students as a result.

Let me illustrate this by one of the models that I use for learning. The first step is 'when you do not know that you do not know' Colloquially I call that 'bliss'; Academically it is what I call 'unconscious incompetence'. What happens to the state of mind when you go to a university or TAFE, is that suddenly you know that you do not know. I call that 'hell' academically, I call it 'conscious incompetence'. Then, of course, if you are mature you say I want to do something about it. You work hard with your subject. That is 'hard work' colloquially, or 'conscious competence'. Then, finally, you become expert, the 'master', your knowledge becomes second nature: you are now unconsciously competent.

Now what is interesting is that the learning takes place in our times of hell and hard work. So what I am saying is that if our students get to where they know they don't know, then they have to realise the terrain that they are in and that what is then required is a lot of hard yakka, a whole lot of looking at new paradigms.

Another area I am interested in, this is just an anecdotal aside, is the notion of the millennium. If you examine what happened just before the year 1000, it was an age of what I call releasing demons and angels. There is a whole new thing going into the millennia. If people have not got a sense of some security as to where they are as human beings and how they relate then they are physically lost. That is when we have all these wretched groups emerging with little simplistic

formulas about life. That is why I think it is so important for us to talk about our terrain and maintaining breadth in learning.

Even in vocational learning I believe that this applies. In vocational learning or more academic contexts: students need to know the terrain, to be 'empowered', if they are to move beyond the hell through hard work to mastery. Education for technical expertise means we need to go beyond skills. We need to talk about values. If we talk about ourselves being civilised or inclusive or open, what does that come down to in the final analysis? The bottom line is that if we really understood what it is to respect a fellow human being; if we really understood that, not just in our heads but in our hearts, then I think certain sensibilities and sensitivities emerge. And its the amplification of those sensibilities and sensitivities that we talk about as being civilised.

It is not having a PhD, but it helps. Nonetheless I have met enough educated people whom I would give—in terms of the scale of being human beings—zero, but I have sat down with traditional, 'illiterate' Aboriginal Elders and as human beings they were magnificent, because they understood the basic notion of that concept of practising to be human. I believe that when a lot of young kids who come from very deprived backgrounds start latching onto that notion, surprising results emerge.

The thing is that in our hell and hard work we always find an escape route. What we do is we blame or we avoid. If we are particularly competent sort of people we retreat into perfection. What I mean by that is we are used to doing certain things in a certain way and we keep repeating it like a mantra, avoiding the issues.

But if you have the starting point that the truth of the terrain does not lie with me but it lies between us, you can uncover the truth of the young persons who present themselves. There is a truth in how they perceive their lives but it is not the full story. What is important is that dialogue that you have with them when they are getting around to saying their sense of value and their sense of being and then you say, "Let us examine the terrain and let us have the space to examine with some sense of leisure". Sometimes I think that we are becoming so hectic, we are now working harder than we ever did before and its more driven than being drawn. But we need to find the space. After all in education we are in the wonderful business of opening the minds of people—aren't we?

SPECTACLE IN THE DARK: YOUTH AS TRANSGRESSION, DISPLAY, AND REPRESSION

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The often-repeated admonition "Don't make a spectacle of yourself!" functions as one of the ordinary discursive contradictions youths face when they attempt to enter the symbolic and political order called adulthood. The moment of their contested entrance into civil society, with its attendant rights, privileges, and enfranchisement, is commonly represented in various forms of official discourse as a moment of both transgression and repression.

In the best of times, the category "youth" gets articulated as an absent presence. In times of moral panic, however, youth is "known to adults" as a visible spectacle, invoking either a familiar nostalgia for the times of "outlandish fun" and "momentary but irresponsible abandon" or a strange iconography of late modern society-in-crisis[1]. Lately, this articulation of the discursive category of "youth" functions in particular reified representations as a metaphor for the alleged lack of stasis in the family, the school, the inner city, or the nation.

Youth is a landscape for journalists, social workers, media, social scientists, and educators, and, simultaneously, it is an inaudible voice in public debates over concerns that crucially affect its conditions of existence. The missing presence of youths themselves (as speakers with political legitimacy and unique epistemic standpoints) from most forums in which they are the literal, metaphorical, and political subjects should not go unremarked. The school "dropout" debates are no exception[2]. Yet merely including youths at the table during state policy debates will not necessarily resolve the crisis of representation raised by the issue of their politically disenfranchised, trivialised, or silenced voices. Those questions which are mystified by the moral panic of "youth-at-risk" (for example, for "dropping-out," "teen pregnancy," "teen suicide," "spectacular youth subcultures," "gang violence," and "juvenile delinquency") are not answered simply by suggesting that youths advocate or speak for themselves, since being taken seriously as legitimate speakers requires conditions of enunciation, addressivity, and audience that make criticism and counterhegemonic consciousness possible[3].

Within the contested space of unequal power among the various parties of the state, researchers have an ethical responsibility—however contradictory and complex—to call into question the position of agents of the state (that is, the position that makes the official spokesperson of the youth-at-risk moral panic possible in the first place)[4]. It is one thing to participate as an analyst, researcher, or policy maker who largely accepts the terms of the debate as they are constructed in official discourses; it is quite another to participate while thinking against the grain.

By thinking against the grain, I mean developing the epistemic, methodological, and political stances to alter, as well as to challenge, official policy discourses that naturalise the spectacle of youth-at-risk. I argue that, when (educational) researchers and policy makers create youths as subjects at risk, they also become subjects of blame and pathology and, thus, are constructed as deserving particular paternalistic state interventions[5]. Such constructions not only trivialise or silence altogether the voices of youth, they also distract from the larger structural realities of late capitalism and long-standing inequalities of distributive and social justice that are the real and complex culprits with respect to many of the problems young people face today[6].

Analyses more sympathetic to the structurally complex reasons for students leaving or being pushed out of school point to the lack of meaningful relations between teachers and students, students' reactions to restricted economic opportunity, and mismatches between home values and school values, especially when students' families do not conform to narrowly defined norms of excellence[7]. Yet, as Frank Margonis shows, such structural analyses were not permitted to shape the conservative U.S. national policy agenda of the mid-1980s. Originally designed to criticise the narrowness of the "excellence" movement, the structurally critical elements of "at risk" proposals were largely ignored. Instead, such proposals have inadvertently reinforced the "excellence" movement's assumptions of cultural deficiency on the part of so-called "at risk" students. As Margonis astutely shows, instead of focusing criticism on the narrow hegemony of the excellence movement, the at-risk reform efforts quickly "dissolved into a discourse pattern placing primary responsibility [read blame] on the individuals involved" who were represented less as victims and more as "degenerates"[8]. The result has been a burgeoning discourse of "monological deficit" assumptions about the very disadvantaged students that at-risk proposals targeted for structural help, without much attention being given to the ideological and semiotic workings of *moral panics*[9].

In this article, I offer some provisional ways of critiquing the terms of the moral panic over the "youth at-risk for dropping out of school" debates, acknowledging some of the ethical and methodological problems involved in the

interaction between research on youth as the voice of critique and research as the voice of adult paternalism. First, I explicate what currents in feminist theory and cultural studies contributed to my approach to thinking about moral panics. Second, I deepen this generalised understanding of the functions of moral panics by conceptualising some of the specific semiotic features that distinguish them from other official discourses. Third, I turn my attention to one specific example of a contemporary moral panic in a Canadian educational policy-making context: the moral panic over youth at risk of dropping out of school as evidenced in the 1990 document *A National Stay-in-School Initiative* sponsored by Employment and Immigration Canada (EIC)[10]. While this moral panic bears strong parallels to those emanating from the United States, it can also be read as a case study of Canada's particular tango between the excellence movement and at-risk reform efforts. As a relatively recent American émigré who has begun grappling with the baggage of unreflexive ethnocentrism and its legacy of ignorance about historical and political developments in Canada, I caution U.S. readers to avoid treating the specificities of the *Initiative* as mere details or appendages to the "real" policy narrative driven by conservative restoration politics in the United States.

Currents in cultural studies and feminist theory: 'What's entitlement got to do with embodiment?'

I do not begin this mapping of the concept of ideology and its relationship to the articulation of youth as a discursive category with Marx, Gramsci, Freud, Lacan, Althusser, or Foucault (even though their analyses have often been useful to feminist thought). Rather, I begin with feminist theorists. It is feminist standpoint, poststructural, and postcolonial theorists who have had to indicate from where, and in whose name and interests, the category "woman" as well as the gendered category "youth" has been spoken[11]. It is feminists (both within and outside the cultural studies tradition) who have challenged, altered, and developed new insights based on testing the adequacy of the work of Marx, Gramsci, Freud, Lacan, Althusser, Foucault, and others. Much feminist work has been conducted in the context of differentially located groups of women and young people[12]. I am not arguing that these feminisms have been uncontested from within or that all differences of interest and location have been recognised from the outset. Nor am I arguing that feminist scholarship has gained little or will not continue to benefit from reworking those male scholars who have in various ways linked issues of power, ideology, and language to the constitution of social subjects in discourse, material practice, and embodiment. While feminists are not the only scholars to have given status to the everyday as well as to social context and historical conjuncture, we have revalued women's common

sense knowledge, standpoints, and experiences of differential power[13]. This often allows us to position our scholarship differently from many of the male grand theorists, for whom issues of experience, agency, subjectivity, and discourse have often been abstracted from contexts in which they were lived (or else generalised erroneously from the experiences of white males, having overlooked forms of subjection that are gender-specific)[14].

It is feminists, for example, who make it our primary project to ask ethical questions relevant to the lives of women and youth: questions such as: Which explanation best accounts for and contributes to the transformation of the subordination of women and other groups?[15] Questions of the entitlements and material locations of women and youth, as well as of the subaltern, have been the pressing concerns of feminists of many stripes. This is evidenced by our vast and well-documented scholarship on issues of gender in relation to, for example, the welfare state, family violence and sexual abuse, familial ideology, domestic labour and "women's work," and the transition from school to waged or unwaged work.

The burden or responsibility to rework the many oversights of gender in masculinist thought has largely been the task of feminists. Foucault is a recent case in point relevant to the kind of feminist reworking that must continue if the interrelation between discourses of entitlement and embodiment are to take on the analysis of contextually specific de-essentialised and lived forms. Foucault has contributed enormous insight into the regulatory and disciplining power of modernist discourses and technologies, as well to the totalising effects of subject-centred approaches to knowledge, politics, and action[16]. Foucauldian thought renders unthinkable any totalising theory or continuous history, making it highly problematic for feminists to universalise women's experiences of oppression or misogyny.

The work of Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon exemplifies an embodied approach to the discursive analysis of entitlement issues[17]. Their work shows how the presuppositions of particular public discourses operate through power and material differentials between and among men, women, and children/youths of varying classes and racial backgrounds. In particular, in "A Genealogy of *Dependence,*" Fraser and Gordon, inspired by the cultural materialist approach of Raymond Williams[18], trace the genealogy of the term "dependency" in U.S. public policy discourse on welfare. In doing so, they offer a model for contextualising the political and material effects of the connotative usage of specific discourses and "keywords" in relation to broader institutional and sociostructural shifts. As does Williams, they assume that certain "keywords" legitimate some forms of social life while delegitimating others. For example, they demonstrate how the term *dependency* has, since preindustrial and industrial

times, become increasingly pejorative. According to Fraser and Gordon, postindustrial welfare policy uses the term dependency with reference to poor women with children who either raise families without a male breadwinner or who rely for economic support on the politically unpopular government program of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). This use of the term dependency condenses the multivalent and contradictory meanings of being a subject of the state into one image—"the welfare mother"—who is often depicted as an unmarried black woman or teenager whose sexuality is out of control[19]. By unpacking what they call the different and yet interrelated economic, sociolegal, political, moral, and psychological "registers of meaning," Fraser and Gordon attempt to "dislodge the force" of such stereotypic representations[20]. I draw upon them because their approach is both evaluative and historical in that it critiques nonreflective uses of the term dependency. However, the strongest reason for my drawing upon them is that they demonstrate how discursive shifts have political consequences for both the mobilisation and distribution of material resources (that is, they demonstrate how such shifts create and legitimate, or block and suppress, access to the state's resources).

Thus, like other feminists, Fraser and Gordon have given locations, subjectivity's, material bodies, and specific historical contexts to otherwise abstract discussions of ideology and discourse. Struggles over entitlement, theories of the state, discourses of power, regimes of truth, and the formation of subjects in language, history, and practice take on *embodied* forms in the works of many feminists. Although the extent of engagement with daily life varies among different theorists, the explanatory focus on issues of gendered power and inequality has made issues of differential power central[21].

It is not enough to conceive of discourses, in the narrowly post-Foucauldian indeterminate sense of the term, as infinite regress or merely as events that link speakers, words, practices, the spoken, and so on. Such indeterminacy begs the question of effects and of the ethics of discursive practices; it holds neither people nor institutions accountable for their claims and constructions[22]. The disembodied and abstract formulation of discourse (and, for that matter, its prior conceptualisation as ideology) does not provide us with a basis for evaluating its effects on subjects. It cannot help us construct a public of readers capable of imagining the specific interests behind particular discourses. It is no accident then, that, in order for specific struggles over entitlement (for example, the right of women to vote or of children or youths to be protected from exploitative labour practices) to take place, the specificity of embodied subjects must be imagined in the first place.

The impact of feminist theory and cultural studies: Towards a semiotics of moral panics

The power of moral panics comes from their ability to create imaginary positions that redefine and rearticulate popular common sense. Indeed, "the public" or "the people" have been thoroughly discussed in relation to grand-scale discourses such as Thatcherism or Reaganism[23]. Far from being immune from recent reactionary discourses, youth have been at the centre of them: they are pejoratively constructed in both the popular media and academic research as subjects of "raging hormones," adolescent transgression, and perpetual infantalisation[24], and they have been subject to a long history of subordination[25]. Yet such discourses often belie the material realities of the 1990s, brought on by global "restructuring"—a euphemism for the effects of deindustrialisation (including poverty, powerlessness, and mass unemployment)[26].

This raises the question of how discourses over youth-at-risk work to construct social subjects as signifiers for the gaze of policy makers. While youth per se are not the focus of Stuart Hall's analysis of the ideological workings of Thatcherite discourse, his historically specific approach to the processes of ideological articulation and rearticulation is germane. For example, Hall argues that Thatcherism fractured public support for the welfare state by rearticulating demands for a Keynesian free-market demand-management economy, law, order, and social discipline as well as instigating a virulent racism and ethnocentric nationalism directed against Black immigrants. The elements of this articulation in Thatcherite discourse strung together several problematic and often contradictory imaginary positions for people to take up or refuse: "The self-reliant and self-interested tax payer—the Possessive Individual Man [sic]; or the concerned patriot or the subject passionately attached to individual liberty and passionately opposed to the incursions...of the state; or the respectable housewife; or native Briton"[27].

Moreover, Hall shows how the discourse of Thatcherism works. Using Ernest Laclau's notion of "condensed connotations"[28], he shows how these imaginary positions trigger and connote one another in a chain of linked interprellations which constitute the "imaginary"—the so-called unity of the discourse, linking the speaker to the spoken as well as one site to another—in which the liberty-loving citizen is also the worried parent, the respectable housewife is also the careful manager of the budget, the solid citizen is also proud to be British[29]. Hall argues that subject positions are neither fixed nor free-floating; thus, they can be fought by taking consciously counterhegemonic standpoints. His refusal to accept any notion of ideologies or discursive subjects as pregiven or as unified by an uncontradictory set of ideas points us toward a relational and collective, rather than an individualistic, understanding of consciousness. His largely Gramscian

reading of ideology and its discursive functions invites us to examine not only the general features of moral panics as ideological discourses but also to examine how these features are transformed by the "historical specificity of the contexts in which they become active"[30]. His analysis of Thatcherism is therefore useful for analyses of discourses of "youth-at-risk".

One critical dimension of Hall's conceptualisation is undeveloped, however. Although he uses the language of subjects taking up subject positions, which is suggestive of the actual performative dimensions of discourses, he does not develop this point in relation to his discussion of the articulations of Thatcherism as an ideological discourse. In other words, he does not show how, semiotically, Thatcherism performs these subject positions. This undeveloped dimension of Hall's work takes centre stage in the work of many feminists and cultural studies analysts[31].

As poststructural feminist Judith Butler so persuasively argues, the material or linguistic assertion of identity is not a question of offering an adequate representation of a *preconstituted* group; rather, it is an occasion for the performative invocation of an identity[32]. Invocations of identities in discourses produce occasions for the enunciation and enactment of desires for community, affiliation, recognition, and commitment while, at the same time, they articulate the terms of marginalisation and exclusion. This kind of approach to discourse points to the need to deconstruct semiotically how categories such as youth are operationalised in various policies[33]. This must be done in order to show how such categories evoke particular affective investments, memories, and ideologies of what it means to be constituted as "youth" while, at the same time, they totalise differences that are troubling to them. I now turn to the semiotics of moral panics as a particular set of discursive performative conditions.

I outline several identifiable semiotic features that appear to function in moral panics as performative conditions for establishing *modes of voice*, *addressivity*, and *enunciation*. To win people's hegemonic consent to particular notions of society, moral panics must create an affective identification between the text and those who interact with it. By modes of voice, I mean something more than genres, styles of speaking, or discursive production; I mean the manner in which the form of the discourse stages and sets epistemic limits on how a particular discourse (in this case, a moral panic) establishes its authority to create a sense of social crisis as well as how it can be spoken, heard, and potentially responded to by those it attempts to inscribe as its subjects. I argue that these features operate more generally to distinguish moral panics from other discursive formations.

The semiotics of affective consent

What makes a discourse official has a great deal to do with how the bounds of dominant and subordinate knowledge are defined, legitimated, and transformed in struggles for hegemony. In several respects, moral panics can be regarded as a subset of official discourses. First, both official discourses and moral panics may emerge in the context of state policy making. Second, both kinds of discourse may share some similar features and codes in terms of how they work ideologically. For example, as James Donald observes, official discourses rely on two codes that move their interested knowledge claims toward an apparently inevitable conclusion. Drawing upon the insights of Frank Burton and Pat Carlen:

> The proiaret*ic* composes the text into already known narrative patterns; the *hermeneutic* constantly reformulates the problem that is the impulse of the narrative, poses and reposes the teasing enigma which must finally be resolved. These two codes create a *discourse of tautology* which appropriates the problem in three stages—i) it theorises a beginning; ii) it structures and argument; iii) it attempts a resolution[34].

It is safe to assume that moral panics, like other official discourses, follow this progression, which, Donald shows, will often be repeated in sections of policy documents covering topics other than those presented in their main arguments. Not every official discourse, however, rises to the emotional or affective tenor of a moral panic. It is thus important to determine under which conditions official discourses become moral panics and how their discursive forms may vary from those of other official discourses.

The semiotics of fear

Moral panics can be distinguished from other official discourses in that they produce subjects which are the focus of fear and moral consternation—this being a prelude to such subjects being the objects of state intervention or explanation. For moral panics to be successful, they first have to engage people's attention, and they then have to create for them polysemic possibilities for identification with the named "crisis"[35]. In short, they must frighten people, and they do this by creating "others" who are perceived as fundamentally different from the "official" voice.

One common semiotic feature of moral panics is the *reification* of the supposed differences between those constructed as other and those so constructing them. Another common semiotic feature of moral panics has to do

with keeping the other the subject of *pathology*, *deviance*, or *blame* so as to render it constantly and irredeemably alien. Of course, the flip side of *othering* is *normalising* those in power by regularising their so-called positive attributes of character, demeanour, cultural and socioeconomic background, and so on.

But even moral panics are not free of contradictions both within and in relation to other competing discourses[36]. Moreover, it is difficult to identify with constantly dehumanising language. For moral panics to be successful in many diverse contexts, they must be inspired by *personalism*, as is evidenced by first-person narrative styles of authority (for example, Ronald Reagan's fireside chats, or heated exchanges between Canada's former Liberal leader John Turner and former Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney, who was accused of selling out the country by supporting the North American Free Trade Agreement). They can even become confessional so as to obscure and mystify the material location of the speaker/addresser—a location which, if known, might cause listeners, readers, or viewers to distrust the truth-value or epistemic status of the speaker's claims.

A powerful televised example of this articulation was witnessed by millions in North America during the spectacle of the U.S. Supreme Court confirmation hearings of Clarence Thomas, which were followed by Anita Hill's reluctant appearance before the Senate Judiciary panel to disclose her charges of sexual harassment. From the start of the hearings, Thomas invoked what I call a *secular evangelical mode of address*,[37] narrating in the first person how he had overcome his impoverishment but never forgotten his humble working-class roots in Pinpoint, Georgia, where he "watched as his grandfather was called 'boy'" by whites and his grandmother suffered the "indignities of being denied the use of a bathroom"[38].

As the *Frontline* documentary "Public Hearing, Private Pain" astutely demonstrates, this discursive move on the part of Republican strategists located Thomas as a subject who, many African-Americans could say, "knew" the realities of racial discrimination and, thus, was one of "them"[39]. At the same time, it made it more difficult for the all-white male panel of senators to question Thomas's conservative record opposing civil rights, affirmative action, and welfare. Thomas's discursive recourse to his working-class impoverishment and his grandparents' struggles against blatant racial segregation and discrimination played upon white privilege and liberal guilt, effectively drawing attention away from his present middle-class location and conservative record. Thomas's discourse escalated to the status of a moral panic when he seized the occasion of disputing Anita Hill's charges of sexual harassment by representing himself as the "real victim".

Testifying before (white) America, Thomas spoke of himself as unjustly accused and humiliated through what he called a "high-tech lynching for uppity Blacks who in any way deign to think for themselves"[40]. His reference to the proceeding as a "high-tech lynching" created a moral panic that rallied support from diverse and previously unaligned communities of interest. As the documentary shows, many Left—or liberal-leaning African-American men and women who previously opposed Thomas's appointment on the grounds of his conservative record shifted to support him. Thomas's discourse raised to their collective memory the history of actual lynchings of slaves and civil rights activists. They identified with Thomas as a victim of racial discrimination being "lynched" before white America, and they resented the all-too-familiar spectacle produced by the reification of his individual sexuality into African-American male sexuality. Having been denied a comparable public discourse through which African-American women could address their own specific experiences of oppression, many saw Hill as disloyal to the cause of racial equality. At the same time, liberal white men, particularly those on the Senate panel whose own records were not free of sexual harassment charges, and who were aware of part of white America's historical legacy of lynching African-Americans, could hardly persist in vigorous questioning of Thomas's workplace conduct towards Hill and were too intimidated to question his legal philosophy[41]. "High-tech lynching," therefore, meant different things to different audiences and united formerly opposed interest groups in their defence of Thomas. It rearticulated an emergent discourse that defended him as a victim of racial discrimination and as a redemptive symbol of masculine pride, albeit from different racially gendered locations—a strategy that succeeded in winning him the nomination to the Supreme Court[42]. Moreover, this strategy also worked to erase Hill's challenge to the masculinist discourse on sexual harassment in both the African-American and the white communities[43].

Othering, objectification, reification, normalisation, mystification, and personalisation through secular evangelical and confessional modes of voice are crucial semiotic features that structure the discursive codes of many contemporary moral panics. They function as discursive resources that can be drawn upon in official documents to produce an affective identification with the framing of the represented "problem" as well as with the official initiatives taken to resolve it.

Moral panics at the crossroads of history and power

My argument about the semiotics of moral panics is necessarily provisional because moral panics do not articulate the same content or take the same form

transhistorically; rather, they occur at the crossroads of historical contexts and are embedded in particular power relations. Thus I do not lay claim to an exhaustive or absolutist explanation of the semiotic features of moral panics, since such occasions are historically constructed in the dynamics and relations of everyday institutional practices. As in all performances of discursive and ideological practices, however, in moral panics located and interested speakers make claims to representing the "real" (through a discourse defining the subject's "needs" or "social problems") and, thus, become part of a broad struggle for hegemony. As is also the case with other ideologies, the discursive operations of moral panics make it possible for people to "make sense" of their everyday experiences, to frame their options, and to learn (or to be mystified by) other ways of acting upon the world[44].

At any historical juncture, the context for enacting a particular moral panic takes on its own distinctive moments of articulation even as it may rearticulate residual elements of common sense. For example, as Phil Cohen observes, popular racism in its modern form no longer requires people to express the stigmatising references to visible colour differences or alleged physiological differences between so-called races—expressions that characterised nineteenth-century biodeterministic discourse of popular racism. Instead, new emergent references to alleged "cultural deficits" or "differences" can now do the same job: "Names and modes of address, states of mind, clothes and customs, every kind of social behaviour and cultural practice have been pressed into service to signify this or that racial essence"[45]. Thus, if articulations of moral panics share some semiotic features of past discourses while articulating historically specific ones, then it makes sense to turn our attention to the operations of one such panic—the construction of youth-at-risk, which in some general way is as old as the invention of adolescence itself but, recently, has even been seen as a metaphor for a nation at risk in a global economy[46].

Noise of moral panic: A national stay-in-school initiative

To challenge the truth of the *Initiative* is not to assert that it is all lies or that it is a conspiratorial imposition of dominant-group interests. Instead, to challenge its truth is to demonstrate how it works as text. This means challenging the conditions, definitions, effects, and legitimacy of its knowledge and examining the institutional context in which it was produced, regulated, distributed, and circulated. In what follows, I offer some tools for a reading that goes against the grain of the *Initiative* in order to offer a theoretical basis for counterhegemonic knowledge. I provide examples of how, in the written text, youths are constructed

as metaphorical, literal, and political "problems" for the state. I show how Canada rearticulates its status as a nation-state in the context of a post-Cold War global economy primarily by making youth a metaphor for the socioeconomic dysfunction arising in part out of late capitalism.

One way of demonstrating this last point about the referential context for the discursive construction of Canada as a nation-state is to analyse how the apparently benign words "I," "we," and "our" function in the construction of "truth". Let us examine one strategic occasion for the invocation of an invisible "we". For example, at first glance, the Foreword of the *Initiative* concludes in a straightforward manner. It is signed by Barbara McDougall (Minister of Employment and Immigration in 1990), clearly naming her the author of the comments, "I urge your support and participation. Our youth and our education system deserve it" (*Initiative*, p. 3). The use of the first-person pronoun "I" exemplifies the mode of the *personalistic mode of voice* and appears to be quite straightforward if taken only on its own; this is the voice of the minister of employment and immigration. But this voice and its exhortation must not be taken to signify only Barbara McDougall, since the comments preceding it in the Foreword authorise not just her personal voice but the *body politic*. In other words, the "we" underlying "our," signifies particular linked interpellations of author and reader, state and citizen, adults and youth, state and youth, and so on, in specific connotations. These connotations imply that various normative subject positions endorse the specific way in which "reasonable citizens," "concerned parents," and (perhaps most important) those who are members of a "nation that cares" should respond to the alleged crisis of increasingly high dropout rates among teenagers in Canada: "No nation that cares for its youth and its future can be indifferent to thousands of teenagers dropping out of high school in times like these" (*Initiative*, p. 1).

Indeed, this last quotation begins with what Laclau calls a "condensed connotation" (namely, the "caring nation")[47]. The caring nation is composed of citizens who are *not* "indifferent to" youth—citizens who are also concerned school officials, fearful parents, and responsible professionals in business, welfare agencies, and labour who rise to the challenge of "attacking" the alleged crisis of youths who drop out of school "by the thousands" (*Initiative*, p. 3). The caring nation is also composed of adults who can see through "times like these," thus signifying an imaginary "we" who must now prepare for the uncertainties of Canada's future in the 1990s[48].

The vague temporal reference to "times like these" evokes the fear surrounding the present economic recession, even as it suppresses any concrete evidence of the latter's effects on different social classes, genders, and racial groups of youths. Indeed, the recession is an absent presence within the text,

functioning as its background, justification, and validation. The important point about the vagueness of such expressions as "times like these" is not merely their lack of concreteness; it is that they refer to a "common-sense reality" outside the text that an implicit "we" (as readers) are presumed to share.

This vague temporal reference is then followed immediately by an urgent call to Canadian citizens to seize the present moment, which is erroneously and dramatically presented as a time without historical precedent. Continuing the oblique reference to the present economic crisis of recession, the *Initiative's* Foreword states

> *As perhaps never before*, Canada in the 1990's needs well educated, well trained people in large numbers. They are indispensable to the productivity gains that our industry must achieve to survive and thrive in a highly competitive world. Yet as matters stand, we could see one million young people abandon secondary school over the next 10 years, seeking to enter the labour market that increasingly views them as functionally illiterate, largely untrainable and mostly unemployable....*We must act, now.* This paper outlines an initiative by the government of Canada for attacking the dropout problem in partnership with provincial governments, the business community, labour, welfare agencies, parents and youth (*Initiative*, p. 3).

The recession's daily structural realities form the missing backdrop that enables the imaginary "we" to play upon the common-sense anxieties of the subject positions which the text creates for the imaginary citizens that it constructs--imaginary citizens with whom actual readers may finds points of fearful identification. The significance of such phrases is that their naturalising language invites readers into what Roland Barthes identifies as the "cultural code"—the things and experiences that "everybody knows"[49].

The unity of the *Initiative's* discourse works to redefine schools for certain instrumental goals to suit a particular representation of the nation's industrial economic needs, which reifies the category of "youth" as "indispensable" to the "productivity gains of our industry". The "caring nation" is one in which the federal government forms "partnerships" with "provincial governments, the business community, labour, welfare agencies, parents, and youth" (*Initiative*, p. 3)[50]. By implication, then, the *others* of this normalising discourse place Canada at risk of losing not only its economic productivity, but also its moral authority as a caring nation. Objectifying and reifying stigmata are attached to many of the epistemic locations from which the constructed citizens, schools, parents, and, most significantly, youths themselves as "dropouts" might critique

their representation. Youths are "viewed" from the labour market, gazed upon as culturally and educationally deficient: they are objectified as "functionally illiterate," "ill-educated," "largely untrainable," and "mostly unemployable" (*Initiative*, p. 3). From this viewpoint, youth is constituted not only as metaphorical spectacle but also as economic liability. Hence, the power of the state to speak for youth comes from the effort to "combat the unacceptable dropout rate" (*Initiative*, p. 9).

This pattern of discursive codes and formulations to both construct and resolve the problem continues through the rest of the *Initiative*, its proiaretic and hermeneutic codes having been established in the Foreword. In subsequent sections which restate the dilemma and the "three-part Initiative and Solution," youths continue to be the objects of the gaze from the labour market. Indeed, this gaze is explicitly stated as coming from "industry" itself, which represents youths as "trapped in cycles of unstable work and dependency, a situation that will perpetuate low self-esteem, and one that invites increasing problems with illiteracy, innumeracy and poverty"(*Initiative*, p. 7). But, for youth, the price of stigmatisation is more than having to bear derogatory labels. To understand what other ideological effects are the product of objectification, othering, normalisation, and reification, a return to the analysis of the relations among "I," "we," and "our" is necessary.

"We" and "our" do not signify the author of the *Initiative* as an individual subject inviting individual readers into a personalised relationship with the individual author. It is probably safe to presume that before it was published the *Initiative* was circulated, redrafted, commented upon, and revised by civil servants and politicians in addition to McDougall herself. Furthermore, given that in some sense it speaks in the name of the Ministry of Employment and Immigration, what is at stake is more than the literal relations between McDougall and individual readers. What provides coherence to this unity of "I," "we," and "our" is the shifting conception of the state and its relation to youth, which, in turn, changes the geography on which youths are charted as discursive subjects. I have quoted instances of a *depersonalised mode of voice*, in which the "we" is present as a subject of enunciation and authority from the state itself, as well as instances of a *personalised mode of voice*, in which the state is made invisible and only Barbara McDougall, as an actor, is its nominal subject.

At still other times, the state is mentioned explicitly (but only in the passive sense) to indicate that the time has come for some sort of action or leadership: the state is a voice enacted to perform its moral authority in some cloudy but evocative temporal context. The actors within it become token agents superseded by the call for *responsible action, duty, initiative,* and *leadership*. For example, in the conclusion's framing of "the dilemma," the state is presented as a community

of Canadian citizens who are called upon to redress the risk to the nation that will be brought about by the state of its dropout youth: "*Unchecked*, the current dropout rate implies an unacceptable loss of human potential, higher social costs, and a serious deficit in the supply of skills needed to expand employment, productivity and incomes for *all Canadians*" (*Initiative*, p. 7, emphasis added). As Donald argues, the fact that the state implicitly signifies "our people" is tautological—the imaginary ideal of the communality of the government and the governed is expressed in the phrase "all Canadians"[51].

To complicate matters further, the call to action at times specifies interests in which the state apparatus is represented in the plural form (governments) as one among many implicitly and purportedly equal parties participating in "collective action": "Collective action is necessary, now, by governments, educators, the business and academic communities, labour, social agencies, parents and youth" (*Initiative*, p. 7). At other times, however, the governed and the government dissolve into one agent—the Government with a capital G: "The Government of Canada has a national responsibility to initiate co-operative, consultative action to deal with this labour market problem, taking care always to respect the province's fundamental responsibility for education" (*Initiative*, p. 8).

The moral agency of the state, however, is not just its performative voice as call to action, social responsibility, duty, accountability, and leadership. In Donald's words, the moral authority of the state mediates two moments of its *agency* and, I would add, *voice*: it represents and reproduces its policy making role for the bureaucracy by constructing the needs of Canada as both (1) the juridically defined state and (2) the "public"[52]. Thus, the hegemonic job of the moral category of the state is to sanction the actions of those it nominates as its legitimate speaking agents and adult spokespersons. This goes a long way to explaining why youths can simultaneously be symbols of the nation's moral and economic future and paternalised discursive subjects of blame, pathology, and deviance.

There is plenty of evidence throughout the *Initiative* of the state endorsing the actions of its apparatus, invoking them as one united voice working "towards a collective solution" through a "three-part initiative": "The Government believes this threat [the secondary school dropout rate] can best be met through a spirited, imaginative collaboration of many partners in one national enterprise" (*Initiative*, p. 14). The three-part national initiative (which actually entailed four separate efforts) articulates the state's moral authority to ratify its own actions by expanding the role of business and private enterprise in "partnerships" with local and provincial governments, labour, and others encouraged to participate in efforts to foster "student retention" (*Initiative*, p. 14).

A fourth and final effort was the *School Leavers Survey*, conducted after the fact by Statistics Canada (under contract to EIC)[53]. The intent of the survey was to estimate for the first time the national magnitude of the "dropout problem," and it served to validate the *Initiative*, providing both the naturalisation of "the reality of a dropout problem" and the means to solve it. Ironically, this effort appears almost as an aside, even though its exaggerated estimates of the dropout rate in Canada served as a post hoc justification for the entire *Initiative*[54]. In Donald's phrase, the survey is invoked as a "sleight of logic, as both the outside cause of the text and also its guarantee"[55].

The document's final "we" is implicit and thus highly ideological. It relies on a *normalising mode of voice*, first turning back to Canada as a "nation" and then gazing upon "these youth[s]" who put it at risk. It draws all the dissonant and conflicting modes of the state's voice and agency which speak on behalf of youth—from the personalistic to the reifying to the normalising—into an imaginary coherence (and possibly into political consensus and collusion): "Canada cannot afford to remain indifferent to the wasted human potential represented by so many young people abandoning their basic high school education" (*Initiative*, p. 18).

In contrast to the previous passage, which gives voice to the "we" as the unified nation, the one immediately following it acknowledges that improving retention rates for high school students might not solve such economic problems as the long-term effects of recession or mass youth unemployment. Although these problems are never mentioned specifically, the state as a moral authority unified in the voice of the "nation" appears to anticipate something less than a Canada that can create full employment for all. It obliquely registers that a caring nation might be at risk for failing some of its youths more than others. It is safe to say, though, that the discourse works to pull those anxieties out of the light of exposure and to push them into the darkness of a depersonalised, implicit "we," as is evidenced in the call to "imperative" action on behalf of "these young people": "It is imperative to do everything possible to give *these young people a realistic view of the labour market* and to promote their individual participation and fulfilment" (*Initiative*, p. 18, emphasis added). The use of the definite article "these" to modify "young people" signals more than youth as a general spectacle for an unspoken national economic recession. It singles out specific youths, those whom "everybody knows" are at risk for poor education and training because they have failed to understand the importance of getting a basic high school education (presumably as a result of having had to rely on social assistance, and so on.

Thus, certain youths become a voiceless spectacle in the adult world of real policy making and state-building. They are represented at once as an economic

drain on the economy and as a symptom of an indifferent nation. Tautologically and ideologically, they are both the *cause* for the nation's problems and a *symptom* of the problematic nation: they are both those "we" fail and those who are about to fail (or who already have failed) "us". Hence, the noise of moral panic over "youth-at-risk for dropping out" cannot completely suppress the fact that, as a late capitalist society, Canada is in a state of crisis.

The noise of moral panic: Will it strike a chord and with Whom?

The *Initiative* appears to speak to its readers in a single unified voice, as if inviting them into the auto-referential terms of the debate. It is crucial to ask: What subject has the authority to speak of the "caring nation?" Who presumes that there is a "dropout crisis among youth"? What subject can allege that the job of schools is training for the labour market, thus negating the value of critical thinking in favour of vocational and technical skills? What subject has the authority to replace the purpose of a liberal education with a technocratically driven education? What subject has the authority to displace onto schools late capitalism's legitimation crisis (around the issue of what causes mass youth unemployment)? What subject has the authority to speak of "*our* youth," "our education system," "*our* future", and "*our* nation" as requiring a purportedly new and equal partnership among business, labour, welfare agencies, parents, and youth?

Each articulated combination of signifiers can have different connotations in the text (as well as in the context in which they are read by differentially located readers). On the one hand, "our future" and "our education system" can represent not only the social democratic ideal of a society that belongs to all of its citizens but also a society whose institutions are responsive to all its citizens' needs. On the other hand, it can also signify the struggles among such conflicting interests as capital and labour, differentially located groups of youths, parents, and schools, or welfare agencies and the private sector. In other words, it can exemplify how conflicting and unequal interests can be incorporated into a new discursive unity that unsettles the old social democratic consensus in Canadian education and attempts to win popular support for the economic and political priorities of a new corporatist state.

To ask these questions of academic researchers, with whom the Initiative will or will not strike a chord, means, in part, to debate how the document is positioned and critiqued as well as to ask what alternative accounts of it may be offered. It is to ask thorny and difficult questions about the fears and desires to which it may speak as well about the material contexts that might give it

credibility. It means that, as researchers of youth, we must think contextually about our choices of language, positioning "I," "we," and "our" within larger visions of social justice, thus making their means and ends explicit. In other words, each occasion for rereading and reframing the *Initiative* can produce opportunities to critique the authority of the speaker and the spoken; each occasion offers an opportunity to provide alternative accounts of young people's varied relationships to schooling, domestic and paid labour, or unemployment. With what language and modes of voice do we position our authority to speak about youths as the subjects of our texts?

We must take the risk of speaking differently to audiences of official power in the state than do the moral panics about youth at risk. We must realise that, as adults and as professional researchers, we cannot speak effectively on behalf of youths without learning from them of their various material and political contexts.

Conclusion: The risky business of creating counter-hegemonic institutional memory

Throughout this essay, I have argued that researchers of youth have an important role to play in critiquing and demystifying contemporary moral panics that discursively position youth in a struggle which has material and political as well as symbolic consequences. By redirecting our gaze at the spectacle of youth at risk, both to ourselves and to the material and political contexts that produce particular moral panics, we can (however modestly) begin to alter the terms through which public memory is constructed in official policies. The value of such an analysis is ultimately measured by whether or not it can alter the terms of the "dropout" debate by asking new questions.

What does it mean to speak about or to "reframe" youth through existing moral panic discourses? Are there alternative ways of speaking about youths that do not invoke them as spectacle? How can official categories such as "dropouts" be used without lending further credibility to the various institutions and bureaucrats of the state whose documentary evidence often denies the specificities of local, national, and global economic realities as well the specific differential interests within various groups of youths?[56] What does it mean to be able to speak to those who are agents of the ideological discourses that produce moral panics about youth without succumbing to their language and terms of debate? Will they listen if we do not use their language? Can our texts have appeal if we do not use the already familiar rhetoric of "at-risk youth"? How can research about, on, or with youth have empirical credibility in the spheres of the powerful without reproducing the technologies of surveillance and seemingly

neutral languages of documentary realism mobilised by the media and bureaucrats? On the other hand, how can our analyses avoid what I have called "discourses of horror and redemption"[57] or (as exemplified by Geraldo, Oprah Winfrey, and so many other confessional television shows) the engaging and yet mind-numbing forms of secular evangelism?[58] What can we researchers learn from the popular appeal of such discourses that might make our own critical analyses engage broader audiences? Who is our audience when we enter the murky and contested arena of youth and state politics?

To call our attention to the semiotic features inventing and positioning specific groups of youths within competing ideological discourses is to call into question the role of adults as agents of the state capable of limiting or, worse yet, denying these groups the opportunity to speak and to be heard in ways that effect positive social change. It is to place ourselves squarely in the mess of the ideologies that separate adults from youth[59]. Is debating dropouts just another occasion for empirical voyeurism, with the primary question being how many "kids" belonging to particular groups are dropping out? Or is it a genuine invitation to open the public debate to youths themselves by laying some of the ground necessary for their voices to be taken seriously?

If we accept the proposition that when youths make a spectacle of themselves by going out of bounds or out of control they are doing something more than making interesting or bizarre fashion statements, then we must consider the possibility that such transgressions may represent challenges to particular notions of civility, belongingness, and voice. Making a spectacle of themselves, youths make their presence known to the adult world, to those who possess the power to define their needs as well as to limit the effectiveness or deny the legitimacy of their moral and political voices.

Going out of bounds in schools (or quietly leaving them) can take many different forms, but, as Dick Hebdige so aptly reminds us, "there is a logic to transgression"[60]. Youths become the subjects of consternation, outrage, concern, explanation, and, not inconsequentially, commodification and appropriation. Whether vilified or applauded, philanthropized or harassed, jailed or held out as the hope for the future, they are exerting the only real power they have in a public debate which simultaneously makes them visible as spectacle and inaudible as voice. The net effect is that transgression and youth are rendered as nearly synonymous. When youths are made spectacles by adults as agents of the state, they become subjects of transgression and normalisation—subjects to be brought back, through counselling, adjustment, and the enforcement of law and order, into "civility" and "normalcy".

Talk about reframing the school dropout question for the purpose of more adequately addressing the needs of specific groups of youths requires a shift from

constructing youth as spectacle to drawing attention to the ideological workings of moral panics that so position them. Ultimately, this may mean altogether abandoning uncritical talk of "dropouts". Ongoing deconstruction of the discourses that locate youth (as well as adults and other institutional agents of the state) is one way of going beyond both the liberal empirical and the neoconservative discourses which, ironically, come together at this historical juncture to position youths as subjects of blame, deviance, and pathology.

But deconstruction is not an end in and of itself. Critical researchers will have to offer alternative accounts that have explanatory power and that appeal to broad audiences. At this historical juncture in late capitalism, it is politically important to locate what we say about youths in the context of the specificities of a roll-back of the welfare state and uneven roll-backs of the gains made by new social movements. Talk of youth putting the nation at risk for losing its competitive edge in the global economy or failing the nation's moral expectations is emblematic not only of the appeal of the new corporatist state and the authoritarian populism of the Right, but also of the failure of the Left to offer what Hall and Jacques call a "popular modernising rhetoric" that can capture public disenchantment with some aspects of the social democratic welfare state in order to inaugurate a new phase of socialist (and, I would add, feminist) development and alternative economic and political strategies[61].

Although moral panics inescapably define all of us in the play of ideological discourses, they have the most powerful effect on those with the least power—youths themselves. These questions remain: Are we, as researchers, prepared to think and act against the grain? Will we join with progressive social movement activists to make some counterhegemonic noise in contexts that reach the broad audiences of policy makers and official agents of the state?

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Notes

1 I note that this expression carries the geographical spectre of a transgressive politics of pleasure. See Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), for an analysis of youth as transgressive spectacle vis à vis the notions of trouble and fun (esp. pp. 17-37).

Notes (cont.)

2 See Paul and Lesley Andres, "Dropping Out in Canada: The Construction of a Crisis?", in *Debating Dropouts*, ed. Deirdre Kelly and Jane Gaskell (New York: Teachers College Press, forthcoming) for an excellent sociological and historical account of how, in order to deflect public attention away from massive youth unemployment, Employment and Immigration Canada created the drop-out crisis through *A National Stay-in-School Initiative* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services, 1990) and the *School Leavers Survey* (Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services 1991). *A National Stay-in-School Initiative* will be referred to as *Initiative* with page numbers in the text for all subsequent citations.

3 Patrick McGee, *Telling the Other: The Question of Value in Modern and Postcolonial Writing* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 1992), 121 and LeRoi B. Daniel's, conversation with author, 22 September 1994.

4 This is not to suggest that democratic speech can be guaranteed simply because such ground has been opened. It is, however, a risk that I argue must be taken if youth is to become politically enfranchised. For example, see Leslie G. Roman, "Double Exposure: The Politics of Feminist Materialist Ethnography," *Educational Theory* 43, no. 3 (1993): 279-308 and Leslie G. Roman, "'On the Ground' with Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Raymond Williams's Unfinished Project to Articulate a Socially Transformative Critical Realism," in *Views Beyond the Border Country: Raymond Williams and Cultural Politics*, ed. Dennis Dworkin and Leslie G. Roman (New York: Routledge 1993), 158-214.

5 Anisef Andres, "Dropping Out in Canada"; Nancy Lesko, "The Dependency of Independence: At Risk Youth, Economic Self-Sufficiency, and Curricular Change," in *Debating Dropouts*, ed. Deirdre Kelly and Jane Gaskell (New York: Teachers College Press, forthcoming); Erich Goode and Nachman Ben-Yehuda, *Moral Panics and the Construction of Deviance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994); George Lipsitz, "We Know What Time It Is: Race, Class, and Youth Culture in the Nineties," in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (New York: Routledge, 1994), 17-28; and Frank Margonis, "The Cooptation of 'At Risk': Parodoxes of Policy Criticism," *Teachers College Record* 94, no. 2 (1992): 343-64.

6 Michelle Fine, *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991); Michelle Fine, "Making Controversy: Who's 'At Risk?'" in *Children At Risk in America: History, Concepts, and Public Policy*, ed. Roberta Wollons (Albany: State University of New York Press 1993), 91-110; and Deirdre Kelly, *Last Chance High* (New Haven: Yale University Press 1993).

7 Donna Deyhle, "Constructing Failure and Maintaining Cultural Identity: Navajo and Ute School Leavers," *Journal of American Indian Education* (Winter 1992): 24-37; Donna Deyhle, "Cultural Differences in Child Development: Navajo Adolescents in Middle Schools," *Theory into Practice* 33, no. 3 (1994): 156-66; and Fine, *Framing Dropouts*.

8 Margonis, "Cooptation of 'At Risk,'" 360.

9 The commonly used term in cultural studies for manufactured crises is "moral panic". It originates in the work of Stan Cohen (see *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the*

Notes (cont.)

Mods and Rockers [Oxford: Martyn Robertson 1972, rev. ed. 1980]), who used the term to break away from traditional criminology and the sociology of deviance. For Cohen, moral panics were periodic campaigns to regulate various working-class youth subcultures by personifying them in the media or through other agencies of social control as the latest "folk devils" of society. Cohen's use of the concept was significantly refined by Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan 1978), who expanded it to include the ways in which particular groups are singled out to symbolise not only a general manufactured social crisis, but also to justify conservative calls for regulating their alleged deviancy. They trace how the British press imported the American crisis over "mugging" to Britain. The net effect was an equation of black youth with crime and alleged increases in acts of mugging. They show how this moral panic alters public common sense in that it entails calling for law, order, and discipline as well as seriously lengthening the prison sentences given to convicted "muggers". My own use of the term draws upon the later work of Hall (Stuart Hall, "Thatcherism and the Theorists" (paper presented at the "Marxism and the Reinterpretation of Culture" Conference, Urbana, Ill., July 1984)) and Hall and Jacques (Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, *New Times: The Changing Face of Politics in the 1990s* [London: Lawrence and Wishart 1990]), who widened the concept to include the articulation of gender, sexuality, and nation (along with race and class) as part of the process of ideological common sense-making in both official and popular culture. This more generalised application provides the basis for my own thinking because it addresses the articulation of a range of conflicting interests within and across such diverse sites as the family, national policies, the welfare state, and lived cultural formations of particular groups. See also Michael W. Apple, "Constructing the 'Other': Rightist Constructions of Common Sense," in *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*, ed. Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow (New York: Routledge, 1993), 24-39; Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A Genealogy of *Dependency*: A Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State," *Signs: A Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 19, no. 2 (1994): 309-36; Leslie G. Roman, "Intimacy, Labor and Class: Ideologies of Feminine Sexuality in the Punk Slam Dance," in *Becoming Feminine: The Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Leslie G. Roman and Linda Christian-Smith with Elizabeth Ellsworth (Sussex: Falmer Press 1988), 143-84; Leslie G. Roman, "White is a Colour! White Defensiveness, Postmodernism, and Anti-racist Pedagogy," in *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*, ed. Cameron McCarthy and Warren Chrichlow (New York: Routledge 1993), 71-88; and Cornel West, "The New Cultural Politics of Difference," in *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*, ed. Cameron McCarthy and Warren Chrichlow (New York: Routledge 1993), 11-23.

10 See footnote 2.

11 Judith Butler, "Discussion," *October* 61 (Summer 1992): 108-20; Davina Cooper, *Sexing the City: Lesbian and Gay Politics Within the Activist State* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1994); Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989); Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "A

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Genealogy of *Dependency*"; Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (1992): 19-54; Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Sandra Harding, ed., *Feminism and Methodology: Social Science Issues* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Sandra Harding, ed., *The "Racial" Economy of Science* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1993); Allison Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman 1993); Allison Jaggar, ed., *Living with Contradictions: Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press 1994); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," *Feminist Review* 30 (Autumn 1988): 61-88; Chandra Mohanty, "On Race and Voice: Challenges for Liberal Education in the 90's," *Cultural Critique* 18, no. 14 (1989-90): 197-205; Dorothy Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology* (Milton Keynes: Open University 1988); and Gayatri C. Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *The Postcolonial Critic: Issues, Strategies, Dialogues*. ed. Sarah Harasym (New York: Routledge 1990), 271-313.

12 Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); Butler, "Discussion"; Fraser, "Unruly Practices"; Fraser and Gordon, "Genealogy of *Dependence*"; Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance"; Harding, *The Science Question*; Harding, *Feminism and Methodology*; Harding, *The "Racial" Economy of Science*; Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*; Jaggar, *Living with Contradictions*; Angela McRobbie, "Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity," in *Women Take Issue: Aspects of Women's Subordination*. ed. Women's Studies Group (London: Hutchinson 1978); Angela McRobbie, "Between Text, Talk and Action: The Politics of Feminist Research," *Feminist Review* 12 (1982): 46-67; Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes"; Mohanty, "On Race and Voice"; Roman, "Intimacy, Labor and Class"; Smith, *Everyday World*; Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

13 Pamela Courtenay-Hall, "Questions of Power and Gender in Wittgenstein's Reflections on Language" (paper presented at the meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, May 1992); Jaggar, *Living with Contradictions*; and Smith, *Everyday World*.

14 Leslie G. Roman and Linda Christian-Smith with Elizabeth Ellsworth, eds., *Becoming Feminine: The Politics of Popular Culture* (Sussex: Falmer Press 1988); Smith, *Everyday World*; Veronica Strong-Boag, "Presidential Address—Contested Space: The Politics of Canadian Memory," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Review of the Historical Society*, n.s., 5 (1994): 3-17.

15 Cooper, *Sexing the City*; Fraser, "Unruly Practices"; Fraser and Gordon, "Genealogy of *Dependence*"; Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance"; Harding, *The Science Question*; Harding, *Feminism and Methodology*; Harding, *The "Racial" Economy of Science*; Jaggar, *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*; Jaggar, *Living with Contradictions*; Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes"; Mohanty, "On Race and Voice"; Roman, "Double Exposure"; Roman,

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16 Courtenay-Hall, "Questions of Power and Gender".

17 Fraser, "Unruly Practices"; Nancy Fraser, "Struggle Over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Theory of Late-Capitalist Political Culture," in *Women, the State, and Welfare*, ed. Linda Gordon (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1990), 199-225; Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance"; Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "Contract Versus Charity: Why is There No Social Citizenship in the United States?," *Socialist Review* 22, no. 3 (1992): 45-68; and Fraser and Gordon, "Genealogy of *Dependence*".

18 Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

19 Fraser and Gordon, "Genealogy of *Dependence*," 311.

20 Ibid., 311-12.21.

21 Hazel Carby, "The Multicultural Wars," *Radical History Review* 54 (Fall 1982): 7-20; Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes"; Mohanty, "On Race and Voice"; Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); and Caroline Ramazanoglu, *Feminism and the Contradictions of Oppression* (London: Routledge 1989).

22 Linda Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others," *Cultural Critique* 23 (1991-92): 5-32.

23 On Thatcherism, see Hall, "Thatcherism and the Theorists"; Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Among the Theorists," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Carey Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1988), 34-57; and Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques, *The Politics of Thatcherism* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1983). On Reaganism, see Apple, "Constructing the 'Other.'"

24 Nancy Lesko, "Mind Over Matter: Towards a Post-Colonial Theory of Adolescent 'Development'" (paper presented at the Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice Conference, Dayton, Ohio, October 1992); and George Lipsitz, "We Know What Time It Is"; and Marianne Whatley, "Raging Hormones and Powerful Cars: The Construction of Men's Sexuality in School Sex Education and Popular Adolescent Films," *Journal of Education* 170 (1988): 100-121.

25 Robert Enright, Victor Levy, Jr., David Harris, and Daniel Lapsey, "Do Economic Conditions Influence How Theorists View Adolescents?" *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 16, no. 6 (1987): 541-59.

26 Donna Gaines, "Border Crossing in the U.S.A.," in *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture*, ed. Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose (New York: Routledge 1994); Joan Lipsitz, "Public Policy and Young Adolescents: A 1990's Context for Researchers," *Journal of Early Adolescence* 11, no. 1 (1991): 20-37; and George Lipsitz, "We Know What Time It Is".

27 Hall, "Thatcherism and the Theorists," 15.

28 Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London: New Left Books 1977).

Notes (cont.)

29 Hall, "Thatcherism and the Theorists," 15.

30 Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism Without Guarantees," *Journal of Communication Studies* 10, no. 2 (1986): 28-44.

31 Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others"; Butler, "Discussion"; Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1987); Fraser and Gordon, "Genealogy of *Dependence*"; Roman, "Intimacy, Labor and Class"; and Leslie G. Roman and Timothy Stanley, "Empires, Emigrés, and 'Aliens': Young People's Negotiations of Official and Popular Racism in Canada" (paper presented at conference of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, Lousiana, April 1994).

32 Butler, "Discussion".

33 At the most general level, semiotics studies culture as systems of signification and meaning production. Semiotic analysis has been applied to cultural products such as romance novels, films, and poetry as well as to symbolic rituals of different youth subcultures. For an example of the former in the field of education, see Linda Christian-Smith, *Becoming a Woman Through Romance* (New York: Routledge 1990). For examples of the latter in cultural studies and education respectively, see Dick Hebdige's *The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen 1979) and Roman, "Intimacy, Labor and Class". Unlike conventional approaches to analysing texts through content or thematic analyses, semiotics aims to show how meaning is produced not as a reflection of a presumed reality or naturally given categories (such as "women" or "youth") but rather through a process of sign production and signification which can either construct or interrupt existing codes of meaning. Semioticians and semiological traditions vary in their approaches to the analysis of linguistic codes and sign-producing systems, especially with respect to the extent to which language or linguistic systems are accorded autonomy from larger social relations and context or viewed as stable and determinant of social relations in structuring how particular texts are read. The sharpest disagreement occurs over the issue of whether readers, including the semiotician, are seen to affect and change how a process of semiosis is read by virtue of their own semiotic readings of a particular text. For an overview of different traditions, see Robert Scholes, *Semiotics and Interpretation* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press 1982). Some schools of method and epistemology are highly structuralist (for example, as pioneered by Roland Barthes in his early work *Elements of Semiology* [London: Jonathan Cape 1967]). Others are poststructural and deconstructive in their orientation to the indeterminacy of signification and reading practices (for example, Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1979]). Still others developed poststructural insights but historically preceded contemporary poststructural theory (see, for example, the writings of Charles Sanders Peirce: and *Charles Sanders Peirce: Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1931); and *Charles Sanders Peirce: Complete Published Works, Including Selected Secondary Materials* (microform), ed.

Notes (cont.)

Kenneth Laine Ketner (Greenwich, Conn.: Johnson Associates, 1977; supplementary fiche issued 1986). My own approach favours that of Eco and Peirce, who clearly outline the relatively autonomous role of readers and thus accord weight to the dynamism of intertextuality or the interactions between specifically located readers in different contexts.

34 Frank Burton and Pat Carlen, "'Official' Discourse," *Economy and Society* 6, no. 4 (1977): 377-407; quoted in James Donald, "Green Paper: Noise of Crisis," in *Schooling and the National Interest*, ed. Roger Dale, Geoffrey Esland, Roger Fergusson, and Madeleine MacDonald (now, Arnot), vol. 1 of *Education and the State* (Basingstoke: Falmer Press with Open University Press 1981), 105. I am indebted to Donald's semiotic approach to analysing official policy documents which crystallised the British Right's call to restructure education through identifying an "educational crisis" in the late 1970s.

35 John Fiske, *Television Culture* (London: Methuen 1987), *Reading the Popular* (Boston: Unwin Hyman 1989), and *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

36 For example, the recent moral panic over invasion by immigrants is challenged by countervailing discourses of liberal humanism. Of course the balance of ideological power is tilted to the Right in the context of neoconservative gains and economic retrenchment. For more on these points, see Roman and Stanley, "Empires, Emigrés, and Aliens". Also see Fazal Rizvi, "Children and the Grammar of Popular Racism," in *Race, Identity and Representation in Education*, ed. Cameron McCarthy and Warren Chrichlow (New York: Routledge 1993), 126-40, for an excellent discursive analysis of the kinds of popular common-sense discursive contradictions that operate in Australian children's expressions and representations of their racism, including the rhetorical device of asserting "I'm not prejudiced but..." and "Some of my best friends are Asians, but...". The contradiction makes an obligatory nod towards liberal human rights at the same time that it dismisses them.

37 Secular evangelism denotes the powerful effect of testifying in a secular context (such as television talk shows) in the same way that one would in a church or before a religious congregation.

38 Transcript of Clarence Thomas, cited in Ofra Bikel (producer, director, writer, and narrator), "Public Hearing, Private Pain," on the weekly national U.S. news television program, *Frontline* (Boston: Corporation for Public Broadcasting 1992). Continuing to address the Senate panel and viewers in a secular evangelical mode of address, Thomas distanced himself from the backgrounds of his white male examiners, taking care to identify with working-class African-Americans: "My earliest memories...are those of Pinpoint, Georgia—a life far removed in time and space from this room, this day, and this moment. My grandparents grew up and lived their lives in an era of blatant segregation and overt discrimination. Their sense of fairness was moulded in a *crucible* of unfairness. But I've always carried in my heart, the words, the life, the people, the values of my youth" (italics added).

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

Notes (cont.)

41 Here, Linda Grindstaff's critical rereading of Bikel's PBS documentary points out that it suppresses the fact that it was Hill who was most vulnerable to the symbolic lynching Thomas described, for it was Hill who was subjected to the degradation experienced by sexual assault victims who dare to speak out from a position of relative powerlessness. See Linda A. Grindstaff, "Double Exposure, Double Erasure," *Cultural Critique* 27 (Spring 1994): 46. On this point and other related issues, see also Geneva Smitherman, ed., *African American Women Speak Out on Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

42 Bikel, "Public Hearing, Private Pain" and Smitherman, *African American Women Speak Out.*

43 Grindstaff, "Double Exposure, Double Erasure".

44 Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance to the Analysis of Racism and Ethnicity," *Journal of Communication Studies* 10, no. 2 (1986): 5-27 and Rizvi, "Children and the Grammar of Popular Racism".

45 Phil Cohen, *Racism and Popular Culture: A Cultural Studies Approach* (London: University of London, Centre for Multicultural Education 1988), 14.

46 See Enright, Levy, Harris, and Lapsey, "Do Economic Conditions Influence How Theorists View Adolescents?" and Dan Offer and Kim A. Schonert-Reichl, "Debunking the Myths of Adolescence: Findings from Recent Research," *Journal of American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry* 31, no. 6 (1992): 1,003-14. Enright, Levy, Harris, and Lapsey show that during times of economic depression, theories of adolescence portray teenagers as immature, psychologically unstable, and in need of prolonged participation in the education system, whereas during times of war, the psychological competence of youth is emphasised and their need for education is downplayed.

47 Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory.

48 The Initiative's emphasis on a "caring nation" displays a rhetoric of national identity that is notably absent in similar proposals emanating from the United States (for example, National Commission on Excellence in Education, A Nation at Risk [Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1983]). Close attention to the Intitiative may help Americans to understand how Canadian official discourse articulates its sense of "otherness" vis-à-vis the U.S.

49 Roland Barthes, S/Z, trans. R. Miller (New York: Hill and Wang 1974). 97-98.

50 The significance of the Initiative as an instance of attempting to speak for/as a unified federal voice should be noted, for, in Canada, the provinces have historically with very few exceptions had control over educational policymaking and implementation.

51 Donald, "Green Paper," 104.

52 Ibid.

53 Statistics Canada, School Leavers Survey, 19.

54 Anisef and Andres, "Dropping Out in Canada".

55 Donald, "Green Paper," 105.

56 According to and Andres in "Dropping Out in Canada," statistics on the drop-out rate are notably exaggerated in the results of the School Leavers Survey.

Notes (cont.)

57 Roman, "'On the Ground' with Anti-Racist Pedagogy," 214.

58 That such displays of public talk function as important emotional catharses for audiences speaks to the absence of a politics of everyday desire in both Politics with a capital "P" and in academic discourse—an absence that discourses such as Thatcherism and Reaganism were able to exploit.

59 John Willinsky, conversation with author, 24 September 1994.

60 Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light*, 18.

61 Hall and Jacques, *New Times*, 31.

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