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Double Bagged or Fries With That:
Adolescents' Perceptions of the Job Market in
Four Urban Vancouver Secondary Schools

This article critically examines adolescents' perceptions of the job market in Vancouver, British Columbia. Employing document analysis, interviews with teachers and students, and classroom observations, the article explores how adolescents in four urban schools understood the difference between having a job and a career in the context of the Career and Personal Planning Curriculum (CAPP). In taking a discourse-oriented approach, this study reveals an important social class distinction in how students conceptualized what it meant to have a job and pointed to how career education influenced their perceptions about jobs.

Cet article porte un regard critique sur les perceptions qu'ont les adolescents du marché du travail à Vancouver, en Colombie-Britannique. S'appuyant sur une analyse de documents, des entrevues avec des enseignants et des élèves, et des observations en salle de classe, l'article étudie ce que les adolescents de quatre écoles urbaines comprennent de la différence entre un emploi et une carrière dans le contexte du programme de planification de carrière-vie (Career and Personal Planning Curriculum, CAPP). L'approche axée sur le discours qu'a adoptée l'étude a révélé, d'une part, une distinction importante basée sur la classe sociale et portant sur l'idée que se font les élèves du fait d'avoir un emploi et, d'autre part, l'influence de l'éducation à la carrière sur leurs perceptions des emplois.

Introduction

Helping adolescents to prepare for future employment has become an important concern of secondary school curricula. Career education classrooms are often designed with an eye to informing students of work, career, and postsecondary options (Hiebert, 1993). Particularly important to this process is the instillation of some of the more intangible aspects of becoming a worker such as the values and attitudes about what it means to have a job or career (Griffith, 1988). Schools, and particularly career education classrooms, have become important spaces in which adolescents learn about careers and jobs, not only because students learn the difference between work and playtime (Apple & King, 1983), but because schools are part of the mechanism by which adolescents are informed of the options available to them when they leave compulsory schooling.

Schools have an important effect on career choices. For example, the curriculum, course planning, and streaming mechanisms all influence how students learn about career options (Gaskell, 1992a). Much of the earlier research on career education in schools has focused on the difference between, and

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perceptions of, jobs and careers (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Pyne & Bernes, 2002). *Job* is often used to refer to employment that is either temporary or has less status, whereas *career* in the language of career education curriculum is often referred to as a profession or occupation that has economic status. However, it is also necessary to examine the variation found in understandings of what it means to have a job or career. Examining these variations can help to uncover how schools, teachers, and classrooms influence perceptions of employment for adolescents. In this article I situate understandings of jobs in a larger social context in order to tease out how adolescents' futures are affected by a variety of structural factors like race, gender, ability, and particularly socioeconomic status.

Although research that examines the effects of social class and social expectations on students is not new (Willis, 1977; Wyn & Dwyer, 1999), one of the important issues that persists is the need to understand how career education programs shape and influence the kinds of paths that students can see as possibilities. For example, what happens to conceptions of jobs when career education only provides a limited post-compulsory schooling pathway? In many cases, university preparation has become the default for career education classrooms, particularly in schools that perceive students to be from the middle to upper classes (Bortolussi, 2006). Many parents and educators would agree that university preparation is an important function of high schools; however, in this framework, students are starting to conceive of what it means to have a job outside the choice to go to university. If going to university is reserved for those students from higher socioeconomic families and the default by which many secondary schools teach career education, students from lower social positions can be seen as not fulfilling this role and are thus prone to be taught differently about the job and career options available to them once they leave compulsory schooling (Boyle, 1966; Willms, 1986).

This privileging of a university pathway becomes even more important in the light of recent findings in British Columbia, where smaller numbers of students are immediately heading toward university when they complete secondary school (Looker, 2002). This means that most students are heading into the work force and to some form of employment (either jobs or careers). Most students, however, are only learning about university as part of their career education programs (Benjamin, 2006; Bortolussi, 2006). It is important, then, to consider how students perceive what it means to have a job and the kinds of jobs that are available to them as they prepare to leave high school.

Context of the Study

The *Career and Personal Planning Curriculum*, better known as CAPP, was introduced into British Columbia schools in 1995 with the intention of assisting students to become "well-rounded, balanced individuals." Meant to complement other academic and vocationally oriented courses, CAPP was described as focusing on students' personal development and on how their schooling and extracurricular activities relate to their future plans (Province of British Columbia, 2003). The BC Ministry of Education described the mandate of CAPP.

> Students relate their classroom learning to the demands of the working world and the expectations of society. Students … are encouraged to show initiative

and accountability in decision-making. They develop planning skills, including management, self-assessment, goal setting and finding support sources. (BC Ministry of Education Web site, 2005)

CAPP, however, can also be understood as part of a trend in career education that is making explicit links between schools and business (Hyslop-Margison & Welsh, 2003; Taylor, 1998).

Taylor (1998) highlights this move toward vocationalism found in programs associated with CAPP such as the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills Profile, where there is a clear desire to instill in students the skills that are deemed important by local business. Furthermore, she notes the importance of challenging programs like CAPP because this "new" or "progressive" vocationalism requires schools to adapt to business and to make assumptions about the human capital and the knowledge economy that will probably reproduce inequality (Taylor, 2002). Hyslop-Margison (2000a) argues that the rationale for the inclusion of social engineering programs like CAPP is a perceived lack of skills, one that has no substantive moral argument as to why certain attitudes (like the positive attitude toward change found in CAPP) are important. Lesko (2001) reminds us that adolescents are often positioned as having deficits and not having the characteristics society requires. The CAPP curriculum can be seen as an attempt to form and influence how students come to understand career.

This article is based on a study that explored dominant understandings of jobs in CAPP as it existed in four Vancouver schools from 1995 to 2004. Each school in the study was marked by a diverse population of students. The pseudonyms for these four schools are Cedar Valley, Elmwood, Pinetree, and Oak Hill. Cedar Valley, located in a middle-class community, had an artistic focus. Elmwood, on the other hand, was perceived as producing university-bound students from relatively high socioeconomic status backgrounds. There were also two BC Ministry of Education-designated inner-city schools: Pinetree, a school that was often perceived as catering to students headed for the trades, and Oak Hill, a large school located in a lower socioeconomic area but that prided itself on producing university-bound students.

Research Design
The two main data-collection methods were participant observation and interviews. The observations spanned five months during the time when most career education activities or CAPP classes were held. Interviews were carried out with 20 secondary students from grades 10-12 who were all looking toward graduation, as well as with eight CAPP and guidance teachers. The questions for students explored understandings of jobs and careers and how CAPP students believed they were being prepared for entering the post-high school world, whereas the teacher interviews focused on their perceptions of the students and their approaches to teaching about careers.

The following represents the findings from the four Vancouver schools. Answers were coded for a variety of factors, including the curricular approach of the school and where the teachers spoke about post-school trajectories, and how students themselves described what a job meant to them. Two of the central questions for this study were: (a) If schools are supposed to be prepar-

ing students for entering the work force, then in what ways do these discourses encourage particular kinds of labor market identities? and (b) How do students understand the role of jobs in their lives in contrast to their understandings of what it means to have a career?

The Jobs or University Discourse

Discourses of career education must be understood as connected to social worlds that are inscribed in and expressed through language (Bové, 1990). The language of jobs provides an important way to explore the dominant discourses of career education in these four schools. For Foucault (1972), discourses shape the object that is being spoken about through grids and hierarchies that aid in the institutional categorization of people. In career education these categories are often used to describe the difference between students who are heading to university or straight into the work force. For McLaren (1989), discursive practices are the "rules by which discourses are formed, rules that govern what can be said and what must remain unsaid, and who can speak with authority and who must listen" (p. 188). The discourses of career education reflect these hierarchies. This critical discourse analysis is meant to disrupt our commonsense thinking about text, mainly how *job* is perceived and taught, by showing it to be meaningful when set in a social, cultural, and historical context that includes issues of gender, race and class.

There were two important post-compulsory schooling transition discourses found in the four schools of this study, that of going to university or going straight to work. These pathways often worked in opposition to each other. Although university preparation was the dominant discourse, the job preparation discourse worked as a binary for those students who were perceived as coming from lower socioeconomic communities. Teasing out how these discourses work helps to unpack what students think having a job means and how it relates to their own lives. Understanding how students' conceptualize *job* is essential to understanding how career education programs are influencing students' perceptions of jobs in Vancouver's urban center. Furthermore, this research highlights the importance of examining how conceptions of jobs are influenced by social aspects such as socioeconomic status and perceptions of students as either heading to the work force or to postsecondary education.

If as Grubb and Lazerson (2005) point out, professionalism is generally privileged as the ideal in career education classrooms, then jobs become undesirable except as temporary measures. However, if there is still a divide in how students are being prepared in career education classrooms, then students from higher socioeconomic areas are being prepared for university, whereas students who are perceived to be economically disadvantaged are often provided with work or employability skills. In understanding the ramifications of this situation, it is important to ask students how they perceive the labor market and about how students are prepared in varied ways in career education classrooms.

The Dominance of University Preparation

The idea that schools should be preparing students for further education is not new. Research by Krahn (1991) suggests that Canadian youth are staying in school for longer periods. His study from the late 1980s found that 77% of high

school graduates in three major Canadian cities chose to continue their education. Wyn and White (1997) suggest that for many Canadians, education has become a drawn-out process wherein most prolong their education because educational credentials offer a point of entry into what they describe as the "primary labour market of professional, well-paid and relatively secure jobs" (p. 106). A United States study by Hurley and Thorpe (2002) found that most high school juniors believed that they were headed toward four-year college degrees, whereas only 6% of students surveyed thought that they were going straight to work. This study points out the dominant expectation that all students should attend some kind of postsecondary education.

The transition from high school is perhaps one of the most significant life events for adolescents (Andres, Anisef, Krahn, Looker, & Thiessen, 1999; Chisholm & du Bois-Reymond, 1993; Wyn & White, 1997). In these four Vancouver schools this transition was influenced by the curricula and teaching strategies employed by teachers in the CAPP program. The CAPP program, although intended as a uniform course across schools, was interpreted variably by schools. So although all four schools were in the same district, some schools presented CAPP as a career fair and others as an on-timetable course. The discourses that emerged in these various offerings of CAPP functioned as a binary of either going to further education or getting a job, with one pathway being privileged over the other. Binaries often work to construct complex classification systems that help us make sense of the world (Foucault, 1970; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2000). These binaries were apparent in the two emergent discourses: university preparation discourse at Cedar Valley, Elmwood, and Oak Hill, as opposed to the job preparation discourse at Pinetree. Putnam (2000) suggests that rather than reinforcing polarities and binaries, it makes more sense to highlight the tensions between shifting voices or ideologies found in spaces like the CAPP curriculum. These shifting voices became even more apparent at Oak Hill where there was a greater interplay between the two discourses. This school serves as an example of the prominence of university preparation and the effect on students' job perceptions.

University Preparation

As a city, Vancouver has an imaginary line whereby the more economically advantaged schools are located on the West side of the city. It is these Westside schools that primarily focused on university preparation. Although it is not surprising that the higher socioeconomic-status schools focused on university preparation, the significance of this finding points to the need to pay attention to how students are prepared variably for post-high school depending on these perceptions (Willis, 1977). The CAPP curriculum at Cedar Valley was primarily based on a career fair system rather than a formal course. The career fair at Cedar Valley was a salient example of the university preparation discourse because of its content (a large number of speakers were from local postsecondary institutions) and the temporal nature of the activity (Dykeman et al., 2003); a one-time offering meant to pique the interests of students about particular kinds of careers by presenting visitors from local institutions. This approach was found in the schools where the emphasis was on career education for further education: introducing students to career possibilities so that they could plan their future postsecondary needs. Another aspect of university

preparation found in the career fair was that a large number of the careers represented in the sessions had college or university prerequisites. Moreover, many of the career fair sessions were about introducing students to various university recruiters whose intent it was to encourage high school students to attend their institutions (Bloxam & Bernes, 2003).

Many of the teachers at Cedar Valley based their understanding of the career preparation needs of their students on perceptions of the neighborhood and its social class. For example, one guidance teacher said,

> If it's not university, it's college. It's something. I mean, this community has high expectations of their kids to go to higher education. I would say very few go straight to work. I can't give you a number, but it's huge. Every year, like my last grade 12 class two years ago, and it's just phenomenal.

Social class is one of several significant influences on how we come to know our social world (Gaskell, 1992b). Although it is difficult and problematic to separate social class from other social conditions, the language of class and neighborhood was used by the teachers at this school to represent why CAPP was offered in particular ways (Davies, 1993; Wyn & White, 1997).

Elmwood Secondary was the other Westside school. It also used a career fair as part of its CAPP offerings. This school demonstrated similar expectations regarding university preparation in the curriculum and in teacher and student interviews. The career fair, although a much smaller version than the one at Cedar Valley, offered similar sessions on a variety of career and job opportunities, most of which required postsecondary education. In both career fair examples, university was positioned as the ideal pathway to getting a career. At Elmwood, during the session on jobs in the trades, the speaker shifted in mid-talk when he realized that the students in attendance were more concerned with going to university. The presenter pointed out how trades could lead into a university education and in fact help pay for a university degree. An alternate session on getting an undergraduate degree focused primarily on how degrees could help one to gain employability skills and thus lead to better careers. Grayson (1999) argues that some students are predisposed to going to university, particularly if their parents have attended university. The career fair sessions at Elmwood appeared to have this presupposition both in the topics offered to students and in how the presenters tailored their discussions to the student body.

Job Preparation
The corollary to university preparation is that the only thing CAPP classes should do is to prepare students for getting jobs. The language around job preparation has become increasingly important as high schools are looked on as places to learn skills for students who are not headed to postsecondary education. The concept of a *life skill* is an important term in the rhetoric about job preparation, as many Canadian provinces have taken up the language of employability skills and life skills as a career education initiative (Butterwick & Benjamin, 2006; Griffith, 1988). Life skills are thought to be those aptitudes a person has that aid in successful navigation of the social world (Conger, 1981). More recently, life skills (and along with them employability skills) are based on the belief that there are generic or core skills that all workers must have

regardless of their specific jobs or work contexts to survive in the new economy (Butterwick & Benjamin).

Pinetree was an Eastside school that focused only on job preparation for its CAPP classes. Discussion of university was not to be found in this classroom. For Mr. Christie, a senior CAPP teacher at Pinetree, the aim of the course was

> to prepare these kids for a job. It's not to prepare them for university. It's not to prepare them for going to any other schools. It's a job-getting course. Whether it's the career they're going to have in seven years or a part-time job they're going to have on Friday. It's a job-getting course.

The right attitude was important in this classroom. In many ways this construction of CAPP was about fostering social capital and providing students with the key attitudes and dispositions needed to be successful in the work force (Bourdieu, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Mr. Christie was determined to teach students that they could do anything they set their minds to when it came to getting jobs. He talked about the kinds of skills and attitudes that he thought students would need in order to get jobs.

The curriculum in Mr. Christie's class was quite varied. Some of the activities were similar to the CAPP activities in other schools, like résumé building, writing cover letters, business cards, as well as job interviewing skills. Mr. Christie also used interest-testing in the form of the Holland Hexagon and lectured on the book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* by Covey (1990). The final culminating assignment included a mock job interview that was videotaped. Students were to come to the classroom individually and run through a mock interview with the teacher. At this time there was a review of students' portfolios, which included résumés, cover letters, and a real job application for work at a local ski hill.

Although the language of job preparation was evident to some extent in the other schools, Pinetree was specifically centered solely on job preparation. Both the teachers and students positioned life and job skills as more desirable than university preparation, pointing to how the rhetoric was being reproduced in this school. Job preparation becomes hegemonic, or part of a commonsense ideology (Gramsci, 1971), as it made sense to both the teachers and the students that this was what they should be learning about to the exclusion of other pathways such as university.

Highlighting the Tensions

Oak Hill's CAPP program was an interesting mix of university preparation and job skills. Although this school was located on the east side of the city, university preparation was a dominant part of the transition discourse for both the teachers and students. However, job preparation skills were also presented to students as necessary, particularly if students were to overcome the deficit of being in an Eastside school. In essence, university preparation became another way to prepare students for jobs because of the delay in choosing jobs afforded by attending university. The inclusion of both university preparation and job preparation was significant, particularly considering that like Pinetree, the teachers at Oak Hill saw their students in a disadvantaged position because of their social class locations. At Oak Hill, as the CAPP teacher described it, one of the goals was to turn "Eastside kids into Westside kids."

Much of the pedagogy at Oak Hill involved lessons that were about fostering these attitudes toward getting a job and going to university as the route to a job. The CAPP activities at Oak Hill included a mix of career education and personal planning and public health kinds of information sessions. Some of the career-related classes focused on aspects like job skills for the future and discussing what kinds of jobs were available for students. Other career-related activities included spending time with a career information assistant looking at postsecondary course calendars and Web sites and helping students to figure out course requirements for postsecondary education and for graduation.

The teachers at this school claimed that they were providing students with a job preparation or life skills orientation in their CAPP program. For example, one teacher described CAPP as teaching "[students] that learning is lifelong, and that they'll always be learning. We think that that is important. If we can prepare them for a lot of life skills in a lot of ways." The language used by the teacher reflected a job preparation for life skills orientation in that the teacher was encouraging students to think about skills as important for their adult lives.

If a skill, as Grahame (1983) points out, is something that can be learned or mastered, then there are moral features around understanding the concept of a skill and life as a set of "learnable skills" (Griffith, 1988). Several of the classes focused on what could be technically described as a learnable skill (Griffith; Hyslop-Margison, 2000b). The history of life skills in schools is not unproblematic. Griffith explored the rhetoric around life skills in Ontario schools, arguing that the public education system tended to use life skills as "an ideological process embedded in administrative concerns about student 'attitudes' and student 'discipline'" (p. 198). From her perspective, life skills in schools are a set of understandings that organize individuals' lives in relation to the labor process. In other words, life skills are part of teachers' vocabulary, illustrating how they view what is relevant to students and what is a perceived gap in the regular curriculum. This is particularly significant for those students who are presumed to be lacking, such as those from lower socioeconomic areas (Barone, 2006).

The job preparation classes looked at applying skills to careers: writing résumés and cover letters, interviewing, and writing thank-you letters. This skills development portion was similar to Pinetree's understanding of the kinds of skills needed to get jobs. Job preparation for both these schools involved going out and finding a job from application to interview. Vallas (1990) points out that there is a need for historical research on the role that the language of skills plays in the process of social class formation. Why is it assumed that Eastside (working-class) communities are more in need of skills than the Westside students?

The university and job preparation discourses are providing limited routes for students post-high school and thus operating hegemonically in career education classrooms (Kincheloe, 1995). In the CAPP curricula, students either need to go to university or get a job. Even when there is tension between the discourses such as was found at Oak Hill there is still a clear pathway that is privileged based on social class expectations.

Situating Jobs: Safeway versus McDonald's

One of the primary findings of this study was that there were geographical and social class differences in how students spoke about the kinds of jobs that they thought were available to them. Two major discourses emerged: a job was either working at McDonald's (would you like fries with that?) or working at Safeway (double bagging). These findings highlight how socioeconomic status and perceptions of trajectory following secondary school play a role in students' understandings of jobs as it was those students from the Eastside schools who thought a job would be working at McDonald's. In contrast, it was the Westside students who saw a job as working at the local Safeway.

Most studies of career education focus on the difference between a career and a job. Dwyer and Wyn (2001) talk about the meaning of career in their study, and their respondents felt that a career was quite different from having a full-time job (or what I am calling employment versus a permanent job). They found that many graduates understood career to mean something other than permanency or full-time work, and that conceptions of career were starting to broaden. Although it is hopeful and significant to think of career as a more broadened concept, the teachers and students in both Eastside and Westside schools represented jobs and career in traditional ways.

In their large-scale Alberta study, Pyne and Bernes (2002) found that career was most often defined in high schools as a lifelong job or as a history of one's occupations. This study found little distinction between what was meant by occupation versus what was considered a career. As such, work becomes constructed as a static force in which all people take on the role of being a worker in a unitary way. Significantly, Pyne and Bernes did not differentiate between a job and career. What appears to be missing from these studies is a critical examination of the variations in what it means to have a job and how this changes with aspects like socioeconomic status.

The findings in these four schools are similar to those of the above-mentioned studies. Most students described a career as something that was long-term and leading to the end of work, whereas jobs were viewed as temporary and current and a way to make money. There were, however, new insights: one of the most significant emerged in how students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds talked about jobs.

Jobs for students from the Eastside schools included working at McDonald's or in retail. In contrast, the Westside students saw a job as working at the local Safeway. As with the discussion about employability skills, jobs and careers have become value-laden (Griffith, 1988), and specific class orientations were evident in what options were available for Eastside and Westside students regarding temporary employment. The *McJob* notion represented those low-paying jobs that people take to make money (Postman, 1995). However, although one can make money working at a McJob, these jobs were not thought of as sustaining or providing a wage on which an adult could live comfortably. In contrast, Safeway provides historically well-paid jobs to the community with other advantages including union protection and benefits, and students could see these jobs as having potential as a career fallback.

Several of the Eastside teachers used the idea of a McDonald's job as a warning. For example, one teacher at Oak Hill asked students to put up their

hands if they were going to go to college or university. For those students who did not want to go on to further education, the teacher described working at McDonald's as their only option. Those who did not go to college or university would work at McDonald's, which conjures an image of the lowest-class job, but those students who went to university could wait to decide what they wanted to be. When the teacher made reference to what would happen if students did not go to university, they laughed, and part of this laughter was an understanding that McDonald's was the lowest form of job available and considered undesirable (Klein, 1996). These warnings were echoed by the students when they spoke about jobs in the classrooms and during the one-on-one interviews.

Dwyer and Wyn (2001) point to a similar finding in their study as they link how aspirations can be greatly affected by external forces such as teachers, but also to how teachers are influenced by those external forces. The threat of working at McDonald's highlights the meritocracy found at Oak Hill, as the sense was that if students could focus on CAPP lessons they should be able to achieve the goal of going to university (Wotherspoon, 2004). This was reflected in the rhetoric addressed above of teaching Eastside students to be Westside students, the presumption being that Westside students go to university. Accordingly, a large proportion of classroom time was set aside for postsecondary research.

Significantly, it was the students from the Eastside schools who spoke primarily about jobs as working at McDonald's. These fast-food jobs were on a par with retail work. Mary Jane from Pinetree spoke about jobs in this way: "I think a job would be working at McDonald's for example.… Jobs? Maybe like being a clerk in a shoe store, or something." For Nava, also from Pinetree, jobs were consistent with either fast food or retail. "OK, like McDonald's. You're not going to work there forever. Working at Metrotown, SportChek, Champs, things like that. Just like fast-food restaurants, sports, clothing stores. Places like that."

For some students, like Timmy from Oak Hill, McDonald's represents a job because it was thought to be temporary employment. "Like, you're going to stick to it and I guess just a job would be, you know, McDonald's for a year and then Radio Shack for a year." Ella from Oak Hill chose McDonald's as an example of a job because she did not think it was an occupation that made you a better person, which was for her the difference between a job and a career.

> And a job? A job is if I was going to McDonald's and working or something. Because it's not something that will affect you and make you into … that will change you and make you become something that you never … it's not intriguing, you know what I mean? It doesn't make you think, oh, I never thought about that before or something like that.

McJobs were those jobs that were deemed less desirable and temporary.

The students from the Westside schools (Cedar Valley, Elmwood) spoke similarly about the temporal and economic positioning of jobs although interestingly, they did not mention McDonald's as *the* generic job. The students on the west side were more likely to connect a job to working at Safeway, a significantly different kind of job from working at the local McDonald's. Here again, how jobs were talked about illustrated another site of class differentia-

tion: Safeway offered fairly well-paid, unionized jobs compared with the non-unionized minimum-waged McDonald's (White & van der Velden, 1995). Although these students also mentioned other jobs like those of secretaries, waitresses, or custodial staff, many of the students from Cedar Valley and Elmwood used Safeway as the example of a job that they could have or as something for people who did not yet have careers.

For example, Galadrial, a student at Cedar Valley, saw a job as, "more stuff like secretarial work and things like if you're just working in like a mall or something or like Safeway type place." For Emily, from Elmwood, jobs were "like mowing the lawn for money or working at the Safeway. There's nothing wrong with working at Safeway, but I think that most people who work there are planning to go on to something else." Safeway in this instance was used in the same way as McDonald's was for the Eastside students. It was a starting point that would lead to other things, but was indicative of a low-waged job that was accessible to students in their age range (Wyn & White, 1997).

Georgia, a student at Elmwood, spoke about having a job working at the local Safeway, but saw it as a stepping-off point where one could eventually get promoted to work as a manager in local businesses. Several students already worked at a local Safeway or aspired to have a part-time job there eventually. Mike, a student from Cedar Valley, had part-time jobs at Safeway. Nancy, from Cedar Valley, who when asked whether she had a part-time job said, "No, not right now, but I am hoping to get a job at Safeway so I can earn some money."

For many of the Westside students, jobs like Safeway were also a stepping stone. Georgia said,

> Job is temporary and a career is … career is something that you probably stick in for a while. Like my job is working at Safeway and I might have a career in retail where I'd work at Safeway and then move to Home Depot and then later on in my career I'd get promoted to a manager at the Bay or something whereas the job is just one particular piece of work.

Not surprisingly, most students described jobs as temporary and current and just something to make money. Many of the students in this study had experience of actually having jobs. The positioning of job as something that was temporary suggests that students saw a job as a stepping stone from which they could strive for more. It is a stop-gap measure rather than a place to stay (Kincheloe, 1995).

Discussion

Although the mandate of career education holds many promises, it is also becoming apparent that there can be a great deal of inconsistency in how schools are teaching and preparing students for work or university, even for schools in the same school district (Benjamin, 2006). One way these inconsistencies take shape is through differing approaches to career education, which positions the curricula into categories that are often oppositional: those schools that use career education as a gateway to university preparation, and those that see the purpose of career education as providing students with skills that will help them to enter the work force (Bortolussi, 2006). These varied orientations often reflect a particular understanding of student bodies that involves social positions that are classed, raced, gendered, and able-bodied (Andres et al.,

1999). In addition, the expectations of students' post-high school trajectories and their social class positions influence the kinds of instruction that they receive in classrooms (Boyle, 1966).

These data reflected a strong class bias in that most of the students were encouraged, and in fact seemed to desire, to attend some kind of postsecondary education after high school. This finding was reflected in Krahn's (1991) research, which found a trend that some Canadian youth are more likely to prolong their education beyond high school in order to gain postsecondary credentials. Staying in school in order to aim for more secure professional jobs was certainly a significant aspect of the university preparation discourse. The students at Cedar Valley and Elmwood all spoke about attending university in order to pursue a career. Although several routes were outlined for students to take post-high school, these routes through jobs and college were still leading to a singular goal of education. This orientation has the potential to limit students' vocational options severely, particularly for those careers and jobs that lie outside traditional university or college occupational spheres.

Social class and culture were important factors in how these discourses played out, as teachers' expectations of socioeconomic status (as well as ethnicity) influenced how and what they taught. Teachers in the Eastside schools were more likely to use the language of life skills with their students. The assumption was that life skills were something that these students were not already getting at home, and thus it was the role of the teachers to fill in this gap. This presumption of the lack of family was particularly evident from the teachers who saw that there was a larger immigrant population in their school. The language of life skills was noticeably absent from the Westside schools, as if the social location of the students meant that they would already have the cultural capital to acquire these skills or that they would learn them at home.

The other noticeable way that social class became central was in the language about meritocracy and bootstrapping. The assumption was that Eastside students could overcome their social positions if they went to university. This highlighted a tension between the two discourses, because getting a job straight out of high school could be overcome for those students who worked hard enough to merit going to university. Thus the real-world skills that these students were being taught included learning how to apply to university and overcoming barriers such as lower grades and lack of funding.

CAPP taught static and ideological conceptions of career and in doing so presented the vocational options as one-dimensional and limiting for students. It is the purview of schools to infuse students with the kinds of knowledge thought of as important about how to live in the adult world. With career development as the mandate of the public school system, it is necessary to ask whose values and conceptions of career were taught and which behaviors were thought to provide equal success in life. The probable influence is that programs such as CAPP prepare those lower socioeconomic students only for lower-waged jobs if they are not planning to attend university.

In highlighting the two main discourses embedded in the CAPP programs, university preparation and job preparation, this study sheds light on how students in CAPP conceptualized jobs. If career education is supposed to be preparing students for an adult world, what does having a job mean for the

teachers and students in these British Columbia schools, and how is it affected by the socioeconomic status of the surrounding school community? This study points to the need for sustained critical discussions about career education and to direct attention to the need for career education curricula that equip students with a critical understanding of both job and career, as well as to challenge limited and limiting conceptions of jobs that are found in the curriculum. Furthermore, there is a need for broader critical work in the area of career education that asks what might be done to change its socially reproductive design and the indoctrination of students into a neoliberal understanding of vocational options.

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