In the 1980s and early 1990s an economic downturn and deindustrialization spread across the Northeast and Midwest resulting in the shrinkage of middle-sector employment (Harrison and Bluestone 1988; Levy 1987). Before deindustrialization, manufacturing provided the bulk of middle-sector jobs. As manufacturing jobs moved offshore, those jobs that remained, as well as newly created ones, are mostly in the service-sector. At the high end of the service sector are jobs such as doctors and lawyers; at the other end are low-skill "McJobs" with scant benefits and pay. Unlike manufacturing, where workers may start at low-end jobs and work up to middle-sector jobs, the service industry has no middle layer and therefore cannot provide the same opportunities for upward mobility.

While the disappearance of middle-sector jobs has had a significant impact on a large number of workers, professionals find themselves in a particularly problematic position. The culture of meritocracy and the individual pattern of layoffs make it difficult for laidoff managers and others to recognize the structural changes that explain their individual troubles (Mills 1959; Newman 1988). Prior to deindustrialization, managers followed a career track, usually within one company, in which they were implicitly guaranteed job security. Only those people considered "failures" were passed over for promotion or promoted horizontally rather than vertically (Kanter 1993).

Today, the implicit contract between employee and employer no longer exists (Kanter 1993). As a result of the new "service economy,"
dislocated professionals encounter an employment market that offers little opportunity for the continuance of the career paths they have come to know and expect. This chapter investigates the hidden curriculum in one federally funded retraining program that was created to help dislocated professionals on Long Island adapt to what Erving Goffman (1952, 451), in his insightful article “On Cooling the Mark Out,” described as “the loss of sources of security and status which they had taken for granted.” In essence, the program serves to “cool out” the dislocated professional, primarily through the process I term “resocialization for downward mobility.”

COOLING OUT THE MARK AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

Goffman (1952) explicated the process whereby individual “failure” is mediated by those who have a stake in the individual’s mollification. Such smoothing over can take several forms, such as stalling, consolation, apologies of self, or the offering of a new framework in which to judge the self. Burton Clark (1960) developed Goffman’s theory by examining in detail the “offering of a new framework.” The new framework provides the mark with an alternative status, which is less attractive than the status that has been lost. With time and coaxing, lower status may be adopted as a compromise.

Clark suggested that when expectations exceed available opportunities the manifest function of an entire institution may be to “cool out” on a wide scale. He argued that junior colleges in California were instituted to “soften” the blow to students who would either be rejected by state universities or would “fail out.” By softening failure, Clark contended, motivation was maintained. While attending junior college, students are inundated with alternative possibilities to higher education. If the staff perceived a student to lack promise in the area being pursued, they engaged in strategies to assist the student in arriving at his or her “true” potential. Pretesting, remedial courses, and the use of the “objective” student records, including grades and test scores, were employed to dissuade students from difficult majors or from the goal of transferring to a four-year institution. Counselors directed students out of transfer programs and into terminal degree programs.

Clark (1960) stressed the importance of concealment for such a cooling out agency. In order for the mark to engage voluntarily in the functioning of the agency, she or he must understand the purpose of the agency to be something other than adjustment to failure. Should it be known the agency is in the business of handling “failures,” the mark will not be motivated to participate. In the case of the junior college, the transfer feature is celebrated although the majority of students never transfer to a four-year institution.

The literature on the hidden curriculum has made a similar claim: much that is taught in schools is not explicitly stated and contributes to the production and reproduction of a race, class, and gender hierarchy (cf. the introduction to this volume). This chapter is a case study of a school which as part of the cooling out process resocializes dislocated professionals for downward mobility in an attempt to persuade them to apply for lower-status jobs. Just as Ehrensal (chapter six this volume) argues that the business ideology taught in undergraduate business programs is a form of symbolic violence, my study demonstrates exactly how specific elements of the curriculum in the School of Professional Development are used to produce a new class of workers for local employers (i.e., capitalists). Specifically, the school attempts to produce, from the previously managerial class, a new class of lower-status workers who will accept jobs for which they are overqualified, and underpaid, and which offer little or no job security. By aligning the interests of the students with those of local employers, the school is participating in a form of “symbolic violence” against workers, who are taught to carry the entire burden of economic change without giving critical thought to the responsibilities that capitalists might be expected to bear (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990.)

THE PROGRAM

In 1994, the Suffolk County Department of Labor (DOL) approached administrators of the Workforce Development Center at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and asked them to create a retraining program in response to the high volume of dislocated professional workers on Long Island who were not being reabsorbed into the labor market. The resulting program is called the School of Professional Development (SPD). The majority of clients enrolled in the program receive financial support through the Suffolk County Department of Labor under the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA). Dislocated workers collecting unemployment insurance are eligible for govern-
ment funding. The program lasts twelve to sixteen weeks and clients enter in cohorts of ten to twenty-five people.

METHOD

I collected data both from focus groups and participant observation. I recorded and transcribed four focus groups with a total of twenty-one graduates of the program, eleven men and ten women. Each focus group lasted about ninety minutes. Participants ranged in age from thirty-six to sixty-five, with an average age of fifty-one. About half of the women previously occupied service industry jobs while the other half were from managerial or professional positions.1 With the exception of one stock and options specialist, all of the men had held professional, managerial, or supervisory positions.2 Because program administrators selected the participants for these focus groups, they were not representative of all clients. However, since participants were likely to be selected as “star” graduates or those most supportive of the program, they were particularly good at articulating the program’s philosophy.

Once I developed a general understanding of the philosophy of the program through these focus groups, I entered the sixteen-week program as a participant observer. Although administrators, instructors, and clients were told that I was collecting data for research purposes, I attended courses, completed homework assignments, took tests, and gave presentations along with nine clients. In addition to the courses discussed in the next section, a roundtable was held at midterm. During the roundtable four panelists, human resource representatives from various companies on Long Island, answered questions about the job search process. Quotes from both the courses and roundtable were extracted from field notes.

COURSE CURRICULUM

In his chapter on the undergraduate business curriculum, Ehrensal (chapter six) describes how capitalist ideology is used in university business programs to indoctrinate students into the managerial class. In direct contrast, the curriculum at the School of Professional Development attempted to remove these workers from the managerial class in an attempt to persuade them to apply for lower-status jobs.

The overt curriculum consists of three specific areas: computer literacy, career development, and management administration skills. While the name “career development” has a neutral ring to it, it is in these courses that instructors focus most on adjusting the expectations of clients to what administrators of the program believe to be the characteristics of the jobs available to them. Therefore, the hidden curriculum in these courses will be of central importance throughout the chapter.

COOLING OUT THE MARK IN THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We now closely examine the attempts to “cool out” the dislocated professional. I identified and will analyze three curricular elements of varying importance: the most elaborate, pervasive, and complex of these is “resocialization for downward mobility”; the second form involves the reiteration of power between employee and employer; and the third is what Goffman (1952) termed “stalling.”

As mentioned earlier, one way to “cool out” the mark is to offer an alternative status to substitute for the one lost. The SPD creates an alternative career path for the dislocated professional to follow. At the same time, staff assure clients that eventually they will return to their prior professional status. In contrast to traditional managerial routes of climbing ladders, clients are told to take a step down with the hope that later opportunities for upward mobility will come again. In order to prepare the dislocated professional to step down in social status, the staff attempt to lower clients’ occupational and income expectations. In addition to changes in expectations, staff teach clients how to display their decreased expectations during interviews and on their resume. I refer to downsizing expectations and the accompanying de-skilling of the self as “resocialization for downward mobility.”

At the same time, staff try to mollify dislocated professionals by reiterating the power differential between employee and employer. Staff teach that in the present economy employers hold all the power, in contrast to the relatively labor-friendly environment of the early ’80s. This power differential makes any complaints students might have about mistreatment by past or future employers seem irrelevant. The clients, as individuals, have to accept and adapt to this new environment.

The third program element involves “stalling,” the term Goffman coined for giving the mark time to come to accept a new status. By
offering program participants more time on unemployment insurance via extensions, and encouraging them to stay out of the labor market during their term in the program, participation buys the dislocated professional more time to come to terms with alternative job choices.

RESOCIALIZATION FOR DOWNWARD MOBILITY

While “socialization in later years builds on attitudes and skills acquired earlier, using them as a foundation for later, more demanding learning” (Brim 1966, 19), resocialization, as defined by Wheeler (1966, 68), “make[s] up for or correct[s] some deficiency in earlier socialization.” When speaking of resocializing institutions, Wheeler wrote of the need to resocialize deviants, as is the case in prisons. Egan (1989, 201) expanded the use of the concept to describe the process of professional socialization in graduate departments, claiming that the aim is to “alter the past rather than merely build on it” in an attempt to correct deficiencies in prior socialization. Similarly, I use the concept of resocialization here to analyze attempts to lower the expectations of dislocated professionals whose jobs have disappeared as a result of bifurcation in the economy. While at least some resocialization in graduate school and prison is expected, this aspect of the program is never stated explicitly. It is one of those aspects of the hidden curriculum that must remain hidden if it is to work and not provoke resistance.

I will discuss two aspects of resocializing for downward mobility: the first entails changing expectations in terms of career goals and income; the second teaches how to apply successfully for lower-status jobs both by restructuring the resume to reflect a less flattering work history and by dissembling during the interview. The incorporation of lower-status skills into the clients’ resumes as well as newly learned interviewing techniques were referred to by administrators as the “marketing makeover.”

CHANGING OCCUPATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

The first goal of the career development courses is to convince clients to consider jobs for which they normally would not apply. These include those jobs outside the clients’ original areas of expertise as well as those offering substantially less in terms of prestige and income than the job from which they were dislocated. Staff routinely refer to those who can envision applying for this new range of jobs as having an “open-minded” while those having difficulty need to “become more open-minded.” To facilitate this change, administrators and instructors provide clients with what Dr. Paul Edelson, dean of the School of Professional Development and Continuing Studies, called “a category of acceptable dissatisfaction” (Dr. Paul Edelson, personal communication, July 15, 1996). To this end, all jobs are categorized into one of three types: “survival,” “bridge,” or “career.” At the low end are the survival jobs, including the “hamburger flipping” types that clients would normally never take, but need in order to support themselves and their families. To compensate for this deterioration in job prestige, the term “survival job” takes on a moral tone because the person is “doing what they’ve got to do” despite the unpleasantness intrinsic to the job. Such jobs are considered temporary.

The “bridge job” is a considerable step above the survival job. Although lower in status than previous jobs the client has held, clients are told that the bridge job offers a point of entry to the next category, the “career job.” Thus, the bridge job serves two purposes: first, it offers the client a more acceptable identity than either the survival job or unemployment; second, it holds out hope that once part of a company’s internal labor market, the client will be able to move up. Accepting bridge jobs does not preclude the client from seeking career jobs or other more promising bridge jobs outside the current employer.

The third type of job, the “career job,” is commensurate with the occupation held prior to dislocation in terms of job satisfaction. While the bridge job may be a means to a career job, administrators of the program know that over time the bridge job may become the client’s new career job. For administrators, the goal is to see that the client is satisfied with his or her employment situation.

These job categories are specifically referred to by administrators and used by instructors during career development and current work topics courses. Less explicitly, these job categories are also used during computer courses, as with the following instructor:

I had a man in my class named Joe [all names have been changed to protect confidentiality] who said he would get a job sweeping the floors of a company and then one day he would walk up to someone and say “You need to press Control-F5” and then the company
would realize how much he knew and he would be discovered. He didn’t get a job as a sweeper; he got a job as a parking garage manager. You may need to start out lower than you expected, but you’ll be discovered because you’re very smart.

In this story, a client dreams of using a survival job as a bridge to either a bridge or career job. As it turned out, Joe did not need to take that junior position, but the story demonstrates the hope that in the future one will be “discovered” for one’s true ability.

In another setting, a career counselor administered the SDS (Self-Directed Search Test) in order to broaden the range of jobs for which clients might consider applying. In place of the terms above, the term he used was *transitional job*:

Explore these things [employment options]. Gather information. I think that for a lot of you there are better, more enjoyable jobs for you than you were at. But remember, in the short term you might have to get a *transitional* job to pay the bills. But it doesn’t mean you have to trash your long-term goals.

The purpose in introducing these categories of jobs is to have dislocated professionals set aside their long-term career goals “temporarily” in order to meet short-term needs, such as paying the bills. With these concepts the client can hold on to the status of professional because the interruption in career is supposedly only temporary. In the interim, the dislocated professional is provided with a vocabulary of motives to justify working at lower-status jobs (Scott and Lyman 1968). However, this strategy does not address the structural reality of the shrinking middle-sector of jobs or the question of whether such middle-sector jobs will exist in the future.

**CHANGING INCOME EXPECTATIONS**

On the first day of classes one client shared with several other clients and the instructor during a break that she felt embarrassed about being unemployed: “I haven’t been unemployed since I started working at nineteen.” In response, the instructor (who taught computer courses) assured her that “It might take time, and you might have to start at a lower pay base, but there are jobs out there.”

Later that same day, the career development instructor relayed a similar message:

**INSTRUCTOR:** You have to realize that you may never get at the same pay that you had before.

General groans from the class.

**INSTRUCTOR:** Well, at least not at first. You have to realize that in the eighties people were making a lot of money because there was a low supply of talented people, but now there’s lots of talented people competing for jobs and it’s hard. But you will get a job.

Thus, a similar strategy used by administrators and instructors for changing status expectations—a kind of delayed gratification explanation—was used to lower expectations for income.

Another strategy used by administrators and instructors to lower income expectations involved asking clients to think in terms of the *minimum* amount of money on which they can live, or the *minimum* they would be willing to accept:

If you can take a lower job, then you can prove yourself [to the company] and move up. You have to be open. You can’t say you’re not taking this job for more than a couple thousand less than what you were making before. So what is the *minimal* amount you would take to get a job? You have to have flexibility and be realistic about what’s out there today.

*Flexibility* is the term that administrators and instructors used to describe this minimizing approach to income needs. At a later date in the same course, we were asked to write our monthly budgets in order to see where costs might be cut. Thus, staff attempted to lower income expectations in much the same way that they lowered job status expectations; clients were asked to set aside their long-term goals and focus on present financial needs.

**THE “MARKETING MAKEOVER”**

Although clients were constantly bombarded with motivational phrases such as: “open your mind” and “change your paradigm” to encourage them to apply for new types of jobs, inevitably there were some who
had already applied for jobs and were unsuccessful in their attempts. The down-sized professional is caught in a dilemma in which she or he is “overqualified” for many of the lower-status positions for which companies are hiring and at the same time “underqualified” for higher-status jobs in new fields for lack of experience. Jacob, a sixty-year-old dislocated engineering section manager, articulated this dilemma:

I did realize at some point in time that I wasn’t getting back into engineering and at that time I got into this program. . . . Yet because every new career always wanted experience, and obviously, I didn’t have any so it was like a catch-22. I know I can do that job, but nobody will take me in that job or any other job because you’re not experienced.

Clearly it is not enough to apply for lower-status jobs. The client has to undergo a “marketing makeover” that transforms, in the eyes of potential employers, a formally skilled worker into an attractive candidate for a lower-status job. The makeover includes de-skilling one’s presentation of self both on the resume and during the interview.

DOWNSKILLING THE RESUME

As part of the project of creating an employee marketable for the range of lower-status jobs, clients are required to rewrite their resumes. Staff instruct them on changing the orientation of the resume from chronological to “functional,” as described in this focus group:

JOSEPH: As far as resumes go, I changed mine from a chronological to a functional. So I was an engineering manager at electronics engineering and my specialty was electronic counter measures. So rather than saying electronic counter measures, in the functional resume I would say X amount of years’ experience in organization dealing with people rather than saying I was an engineering manager. Because as soon as you say engineering manager, you went to a garment place or went to a gas station or something for a job, they would say, “We don’t need engineers.” So I would highlight organizational skills. I like to deal with other people and things like that versus the technical aspects so you could fit into a different niche.

GROUP LEADER: Could someone define functional resume?

JACOB: It’s more generic. It tells what your skills are but it doesn’t relate to the specific industry you came out of. [It] doesn’t talk about history.

Clients were taught to “generalize,” that is, to emphasize skills that translate well to other jobs and industries. Unfortunately, when specific skills are generalized, value is lost. For example, Joseph was no doubt a valuable asset to his former employer specifically because of his knowledge of electronic counter measures. However, when he attempted to translate that intellectual capital to another industry, and reframed it as general managerial experience, information was lost and skills were downgraded. Even if this “generalization” makes the dislocated professional more marketable outside his or her original industry, the jobs he or she is now “qualified” to pursue are inevitably of lower pay and occupational prestige. At the same time as the client’s resume is “downgraded,” the client is less likely to be told, “You are overqualified.” Positive phrases like generalizable skills and functional resume hide an important function of the marketing makeover—the de-skilling of the client—a central socialization message of the program’s hidden curriculum.

DE-SKILLING DURING THE INTERVIEW

The program also taught the importance of demonstrating lowered expectations during the interview as discussed in the following quote by Marty, a fifty-eight-year-old dislocated systems engineer:

We came into this room for a practice with interviews and what we were supposed to do was, each person was supposed to think of two questions to ask everybody. Each individual, as you knew them, that would really maybe stop them during an interview. I put some thought into it. I asked questions that was on the border of being gross. I was really trying to reach. I reached at one gal that was, she was laid-off in the banking industry. She was in human resources with one of the larger banks on Long Island and she wanted to go elsewhere and do something different. And I asked her [the] very pointed question of why she would be willing to accept a job that was less responsible, less salary, and less this than what you had for
the last fifteen years or something. Somebody asks you that in an interview [and] it can set you back. And I think that that was good practice. Damn good practice.

Staff frequently warn clients that during interviews they will be asked whether they will be satisfied taking a particular job given their prior income and experience. In response, clients are told to assure employers that this job meets their expectations and that they are comfortable with the pay, as demonstrated in this coaching session during a career development class:

INSTRUCTOR: What if you're asked, "Why are you willing to take a job for $25,000 less than you were making?" How can you convince me, the interviewer, to believe you'll stay?
CLIENT: I'm willing to learn because it's a new industry so I can start at the bottom to learn it.
INSTRUCTOR: Based on that, what did you want from us in the future?

During one class in career development, the assistant director of the program came to let us interview her. We were given two weeks to think of tough interview questions that might stump us during an interview:

CLIENT: I see you have no experience in this area of banking. What makes you think you'll do well in this job?
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: I like numbers and working with formulas. I like repetition. I know that there's a high rate of turnover in the banking industry because people get bored, but I like repetition.

The roundtable had a similar purpose, to prepare clients to be interviewed by giving them a chance to ask a panel of human resource representatives about the interview from their perspective:

CLIENT: When you ask me what my salary requirements are, what should I say?
PANELIST: It's a personal decision. You need to give a realistic range on which you can live. I wouldn't give a number, but a range. You need to say you have flexibility.

Similar to the advice given by the program staff, instead of considering the type of industry, the amount of training or skill the job might require, this advice suggests that one should be prepared to settle for the minimum on which she or he "can live."

At one point during the roundtable, a client sought advice from the panelists about her search for a job in computer graphics because it was so different from any of the jobs she had held before:

PANELIST: It's very important to say, "I'm willing to start at an entry level."
SECOND PANELIST: Target a company that has a division in graphic arts and get a job anywhere and then move over to the graphics department. Get your foot in the door and then transfer into that department.
FIRST PANELIST: Be careful when you go for an entry-level job with another job in mind. You need to show enthusiasm for that entry-level position and that you want to be in that position a while. Otherwise I would feel you'd get bored.

It is not enough to apply for an entry-level position; the applicant has to demonstrate that he or she really wants that position, even though he or she has sights on another job. Additionally, because entrepreneurial experience might be viewed as threatening to employers, clients were taught to hide this aspect of their work history. Should the employer learn about it, the client must assure the employer that she or he is not a threat. One panelist gave this word of advice:

There are a lot of entrepreneurs in here [referring to when the clients introduced themselves and gave employment backgrounds]. That's great. It's great. I could never do that. But if you've been an entrepreneur, we are wary because one, you may leave for your own company. Or two, you may try to run ours. So you need to transcribe [translate] it as experience. Don't put C.E.O. of a company, or president. Instead, put "hired, managed . . ." Don't lie, just don't make it up front. If it comes out in an interview, OK. So, just allay my fears.

If the discrepancy between expectations and skills is too large, employers will be wary of the mismatch, as evident in the following exchange:
PANELIST: We don’t ask for salary history anymore, but we ask for a range over the phone. The key is to say you’re flexible.
SECOND PANELIST: Over the phone I’ll say, “Let’s be honest. If you were a VP previously and this is a low position . . .” He must say, “I’m flexible.”
CLIENT: Can you under-do your salary requirement? Coming in too low?
FIRST PANELIST: Yes, that’s bad because you’re undervaluing yourself. We had someone who did that and we asked what was wrong.
THIRD PANELIST: You may want to submit a modified resume that says you’re OK, not the best in the world and then have the wonderful one as a backup.

This is the closest anyone came to articulating the importance of actually de-skilling the resume. If an interviewee offers a potential employer a resume that reflects high-skills yet asks for an entry-level job, the potential employer may sense the mismatch and ask, “What is wrong?” By de-skilling the resume, a client can allay the employer’s fears by preemptively countering the overqualification issue. Furthermore, if there are lingering questions about overqualification, the client should use the interview to assuage employers’ fears by emphasizing one’s lowered expectations.

Importantly, the word de-skilling is never used by staff. Instead, the functional resume is offered as a more successful style than the traditional, chronological one because it is “more generic” and thus can be used with a wider array of employers. Similarly, no one was told “lower your expectations,” but to “have an open mind” when considering different jobs. By using such euphemisms, the staff maintained a relentlessly positive tone while pursuing the hidden agenda of cooling out the clients.

THE REITERATION OF POWER AND DISCRIMINATION

During one of the career development courses, we were handed a sheet that outlined the cycle of emotional responses to the “trauma” of dislocation, among which were denial, depression, and anger. The staff maintained that people who are not successful at finding a job after the program either do not have an “open mind” or are “stuck in the anger phase.” According to the career development instructor, if a client still harbors anger toward prior or potential employers, this will “flow out” during interviews and employers will “not hire a worker who has issues.” Thus, as part of the cooling out process, clients are told to get over their anger if they want to find a job. This is remarkably congruent with the meritocratic view that losing or finding a job is not a structural economic issue so much as a personal problem and matter of individual responsibility.

In conjunction with coaxing clients to “let go of their anger” came a threat of sorts. Clients were told that in today’s labor market employers have all the power so there is no use questioning their motives or behavior. The following warning from the career development instructor demonstrated the message that was repeated frequently:

This is not the seventies and eighties. Now the shoe is on the other foot. If you don’t want a job, there are twenty others ready to take it.

During one class, a client complained about being taken advantage of at her previous work site. In response, the instructor defended employers: “The whole business environment is like that. They ask you to stay long hours and can because five other people are willing to take your place.” This message was similarly implicit at the roundtable. One panelist suggested the clients display their understanding of this during the interview: “Show flexibility. Say you’re willing to work more than forty hours a week . . . don’t ask, ‘What are the benefits?’ Wait until I bring them up.”

While power differential at the roundtable was obviously tilted in the direction of employers, panelists somewhat cynically reframed the situation as an “opportunity” for the clients. One of the clients asked the panelists an apparently vague question: “What do you think about temping?” to which the first panelist eagerly responded by listing the advantages to the employer:

PANELIST: It’s very advantageous to us because there is no turnover on our payroll. You’re [the company is] not stuck with unemployment, and you can just say “good-bye.” We’ll try them out, like engineers and technical people, but we don’t hire any managers or vice presidents this way.
SECOND PANELIST: From your perspective, you can also walk away and you can see the culture of the company.
FIRST PANELIST: It's a good opportunity to get your foot in the door so [you] get exposure and experience, and learning good skills in the meantime. We do our own recruiting and advertising ourselves and then we hire and call Payroll Services and the person works for them. Then it can develop into a permanent... [she catches herself] Oh, we don't like to say "permanent," we say "direct" employee.
THIRD PANELIST: What's nice is you can work two to three days a week and still look for a job the other days and you may get introduced to new skills and companies.

Downsized clients, who no longer have steady paychecks, medical insurance, or retirement packages are encouraged to view "temp" jobs as an opportunity—contingent, easily disposable, mainly part-time work. They are told to think of such work as a mutually rewarding arrangement. This ideology of encouragement continued throughout the roundtable.

Any discussion of structural issues was quashed, as were attempts to see the situation from the workers' perspective. When the issue of age discrimination was raised by a client during the roundtable, the panelists reacted in much the same way that administrators and instructors had handled such claims. First, they denied that discrimination occurred and then implicitly blamed the client through reference to a self-fulfilling prophecy: because attitude is so important during an interview, if one expects to be discriminated against, he or she will send out negative signals, which is what the interviewer is responding to, not the age of the interviewee. In this "blaming the victim" tactic, the responsibility is turned back onto the client. If the issue is pushed or a blatant example of discrimination is given, the client is told, "You wouldn't want to work for that type of company anyway." This sequence was played out as follows:

CLIENT: A lot of people here are over fifty. And I have experience myself [of] discrimination.

Panelist: I totally disagree. I believe people believe that, but when I look, I want people who don't jump around and I see older people as more stable, more dependable. They know what I need. I think you should show enthusiasm. Maybe it's in your mind because that comes through in the interview and that caused it.

SAME CLIENT: I talked to an employment agency over the phone and I told them I had twenty-three years' experience. They said, "Why don't you retire?"
SECOND PANELIST: Well, you don't want to work for them.
THIRD PANELIST: It's not a liability.
SECOND PANELIST: I see people and they have an attitude of "I'm old so you won't hire me." Not to say there are not companies like that, but you don't want to take a job with that company. Work ethic is better in older people.
FOURTH PANELIST: Take a look at the culture of the company. Look down the hallway. If there's lots of young people there, you don't want to work there.

In this poignant example the overwhelming power differential between employer and employee was masked by arguing with clients that if they had a choice, they would not want to work for a firm that would discriminate against them, making it seem not only that the client had agency, but that in some way employer and employee encountered each other on a level playing field.

Thus, in many subtle ways clients were taught that they had to conform to the needs of employers by happily providing the contingent labor they need. Participating as contingent labor is to be viewed as an "opportunity" by the dislocated professional. This steel curriculum lies hidden behind the velvet veneer of opportunity, choice, and agency.

STALLING

Goffman (1952, 458) analyzed techniques by which agents may convince the mark that there is still a slight chance that the loss has not really occurred. When the mark is stalled, he [sic] is given a chance to become familiar with the new conception of self he will have to accept before he is absolutely sure that he will have to accept it. Earlier, we saw evidence of this strategy when staff asked clients...
to set aside their long-term career goals “temporarily” in order to meet short-term needs. Clients were told they do not have to “give up” their long-term goals, but must in the meantime adjust to the present circumstances of lower-status work.

The contention that the program “stalls” clients so they can adjust to their new position in life is further supported by the laxness of the program; it was strongly recommended that students not look for jobs while in the program. This is in stark contrast to the urgency felt by clients of welfare-to-work programs who are told explicitly that their job is to seek employment and that assistance from the government is contingent on applying for a minimum number of jobs (Miller 1983). By creating a break in the job search process, clients are given an opportunity to rethink the type of jobs they will apply for once they resume the search (after the program cools them out).

DISCUSSION

Within any system that experiences strain, conservative agencies will seek to minimize strain both to the system and the individuals affected so that social protest is prevented. Such structures will attempt to maintain motivation for participation in the system (Clark 1960). This chapter has analyzed one such example. Macroeconomic changes such as polarization of the labor market left a dearth of professional managerial jobs and created a new group of unemployed workers. In response, the local government created a program to “cool out” dislocated professionals who could not find work.

Why would a program created to help dislocated professionals align its interests with those of the capitalist class at the expense of its clients? Muzzin (chapter eight this volume) asks a similar question: What produced the schism within academic departments in the pharmaceutical sciences which led to differential rewards for faculty who pursue the development of pharmaceutical care (mostly women) and those who pursue clinical research interests (mostly men)? One piece of the puzzle can be explained by financial concerns. Specifically, the departments have become reliant upon research funding from transnational pharmaceutical producers of synthetic drugs. Thus, academics participating in this type of research attract money from these large corporations and are rewarded in terms of tenured positions and higher salaries.

Similarly, the School of Professional Development depends upon the Department of Labor (DOL) for funding. While the DOL does not give the program specific quotas, statistics on placements after graduating from the program are kept and compared to other (re)training programs they administer. This aligns the program with the interests of local employers by making the program accountable to employer interests. This includes persuading clients to accept contingent jobs for which they are overqualified, as well as jobs that pay much less than previous jobs because these are now the jobs for which local employers are hiring.

By offering individual strategies to alleviate the clients’ problems, administrators undermine structural explanations and remedies for what is occurring in the economy. This process puts the onus of change on the shoulders of the dislocated professionals, making structural changes seem as though they are really individual troubles. When viewed as individual troubles, dislocated professionals are less likely to take collective action or hold capitalists accountable for decisions to create a contingent workforce at the expense of the worker.

This chapter has advanced the literature on the hidden curriculum on two fronts. First, the theory of the hidden curriculum was applied to a new site, the retraining program. This is important because it suggests that the processes of the hidden curriculum do not simply cease at the end of schooling, but continue to occur outside the traditional academic setting. Second, it demonstrates how the hidden curriculum can adapt to meet the changing needs of capitalists by resocializing a previously socialized middle-class group of workers into accepting lower-status jobs and hence providing a new habitus from the one they originally acquired through earlier socialization experiences. As the quote in chapter two by Karen Anjjar suggests, the transformative nature of the hidden curriculum accounts for part of its elusive nature: “[I]t moves. It doesn’t remain constant. If it remained constant it would be easy to unearth and deconstruct and everybody would know about it and where it would occur . . .” (Gair and Mullins 2001, 24).
NOTES

1. What I classify as service jobs included supervisor, computer tape librarian, telephone representative, communications specialist, and congressional aide. Managerial and professional jobs include vice president, director of human resources, district representative, supervisor of quality assurance, and manager of customer service.

2. Prior occupations of the men included electronics engineer, engineering section manager, product control accountant, vice president, systems control engineer, methods engineer, supervisor, program manager, administrative vice president, and controller.