

The Restoration of Group Process in Career Counseling Groups

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ABSTRACT. Career interventions work. Studies show that whether they take the form of classes, workshops, individual counseling, psychoeducational groups, seminars, or intentionally structured counseling groups, career interventions make a difference in participants' career decidedness and career maturity. The focus of this article is on intentionally structured career counseling groups and includes a review of the current practices in leadership of those groups. The author offers resource ideas for improving the quality and effectiveness of the group process leadership in career counseling groups.

CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION has been given over the last several decades to the effective use of action methods in group work, yet leaders of career counseling groups generally do not make optimal use of such methods. Career counseling groups resemble classes, seminars, and workshops more than they do counseling groups, in that leaders rely on direct or indirect instructional activities and neglect group dynamics. There is a need for a "true" group counseling model that can be used to facilitate career development groups—a model that attends appropriately to traditional group properties (Kivlighan, 1990). Although there has been a steadily increasing call in the literature over the last few decades for the use of group process in career counseling (Zimpfer & Carr, 1989), the response has not been forthcoming. My purpose in this article is to present a critique of current career counseling groups and a response in the form of resource ideas for an intentionally structured approach to a career counseling group.

Career Interventions

Sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that career interventions work (Davis & Horne, 1986; Glaize & Myrick, 1984; Krieshok, 1998; Oliver &

Spokane, 1988; Rounds & Tinsley, 1984). Some interventions work better than others. Some are effective with a wide range of people who possess differing levels of readiness and who function in a variety of settings and circumstances. Career counseling seems to work with individuals as well as with groups, and career interventions work with members of structured groups as well as with students in classes and seminars. The question is no longer whether or not career interventions work, but how well and with whom (Oliver & Spokane, 1988; Rounds & Tinsley, 1984).

Unfortunately, the relatively small number of empirical studies reported in the literature do little to shed extra light on process–outcome relationships. Kivlighan (1990) found only 26 studies in a literature review over a period of 38 years that possessed any kind of minimal description of career counseling group process along with any type of empirical assessment. That total is less than one per year. Others have described the research in career counseling group effectiveness as unsophisticated and inadequate (Zimpfer & Carr, 1989). In a comprehensive meta-analysis of career counseling outcome studies reported over a 32-year period, Oliver and Spokane (1988) found only 58 studies that qualified for inclusion. Few standardized instruments were used in the studies reviewed. Nonetheless, despite the paucity of research and the lack of process analysis, there is still sufficient affirmative data to conclude that career counseling works and that the longer and more intense the treatment process, the better the results (Krieshok, 1998). Intensity of treatment, meaning the number of hours and sessions, is apparently the most significant contributor to the magnitude of differences in such outcome areas as career maturity and career decidedness (Oliver & Spokane, 1988). Individual career counseling, workshops, and classes are more effective than structured groups, even though the latter intervention is also effective. The relatively low position of structured groups could be best understood as a product of the amount of emphasis given to structure and the lack of emphasis on group dynamics (Butcher, 1982; Kivlighan, 1990). Regretfully, there seems to be little balance of process and content in career counseling groups.

Contextual Perspective

Several conceptual frameworks individually and collectively contain descriptions of the types of groups conducted by leaders who work in the helping professions. One of the earlier and more useful organizational structures is that of Gazda (1971), who defined guidance, counseling, and psychotherapy groups. The Association for Specialists in Group Work (1992) slightly modified that model in a set of training and practice standards organized around specializations in four kinds of groups: task and work groups, guidance and psychoeducational groups, counseling and interpersonal prob-

lem-solving groups, and psychotherapy and personality reconstruction groups. Others have offered a variation that classified groups by a process matrix; on the one axis are Gazda's three groups—guidance, counseling, and psychotherapy—presented as process groups, and on the other axis are three groups presented as goals—development, remediation, and adjustment (Waldo & Bauman, 1998). Still others (Wilbur, Betz, & Roberts-Wilbur, 1983) have offered a typology that classifies three different types of groups: task groups, socio-process groups, and psycho-process groups. On the basis of the amount of attention devoted to various types of group in the professional literature, the general consensus seems to favor a classification system that roughly resembles Gazda's original system: guidance or psychoeducational groups, counseling groups, and therapy groups.

The most common group in the area of career interventions is the psychoeducational or guidance group. Regardless of whether the group is conceived of as a guidance group or as a counseling group, the result comes out looking most like a psychoeducational group (Richards, Burlingame, & Fuhriman, 1990). "What is available in the literature generally describes packaged programs of career planning that are geared toward educational courses, workshops, and seminars. The focus is almost invariably on providing occupational information, administering interests and aptitude inventories, teaching decision making skills and practicing the art of job hunting" (Butcher, 1982, p. 200). More sobering is Kivlighan's (1990a) discovery that each of the groups examined in his comprehensive review used "imparting information or giving advice as a prominent feature of the group treatment" (p. 68), even though there is less conceptual and empirical support for the importance of therapist-initiated guidance and advice-giving (Fuhriman & Burlingame, 1990a, p. 33).

Emphasis on Information and Not on Group Process

It is the enamored with the role of information and the concomitant relative disdain for group process that seem to mark career group interventions. It is as though leaders are more focused on the content than on the process, on the theme rather than on the group members (Richards et al., 1990). Of the aforementioned prepackaged career counseling group models, the vocational exploration group (VEG; Daane, 1972) attends more faithfully to group process than other more rational, decision-oriented groups like the career exploration group (Sherry & Staley, 1984) and the sequential elimination model (Gati, Fassa, & Houminer, 1995). Perhaps the attention to process has enabled the VEG to accrue such support in the literature (Glaize & Myrick, 1984; Johnson, Johnson, Johnson, & Yates, 1982; Johnson, Johnson, & Yates, 1981).

If and when the content becomes more important than group process, lead-

ers can easily fall into a trap of offering too much therapist-initiated talk and even confrontation (Burlingame & Fuhriman, 1990). Group members' career development needs are not met as fully in groups that function like traditional classes. In fact, when career counseling group leaders do not make use of the "group qua group," then it should be considered a psychoeducational group or a class rather than a counseling group. After all, one of the core characteristics of a small group that distinguishes it from other collections of people is that there is a shared group identity that is, in turn, reflected by an informal interaction, by interpersonal relationships, and by a communication exchange system directed toward achievement of an identifiable goal.

Structured Career Counseling Groups

Within the universe of types of groups, however classified, is a type of group commonly referred to as a *structured group*. Some disagreement exists over the meaning of such a term (Fuhriman & Burlingame, 1990a) or even the need for such a term, primarily because it is hard to imagine how any group can be free of at least some degree of structure, and therefore be considered unstructured (Winston, Bonney, Miller, & Dagley, 1988). It is a situation in which the common vocabulary does not necessarily mean a common referent (Kaul, 1990). Nonetheless, a structured group is considered to be a time-limited one that focuses a precise leadership plan on a predetermined goal, usually a developmental theme, life skill, or developmental transition (Drum & Knott, 1977). Structured groups, sometimes referred to as *theme groups*, typically limit the range of sanctioned material open to whole group consideration or discussion (Drum, 1990). *Intentional structure*, a term favored in this article, refers to the amount of control or direction the group leader exercises, the degree to which members perceive the group as having a shared, specific goal, and the relative degree to which member and leader roles are clear and fulfilled (Winston et al., 1988).

Structure is a rubric used to house a wide range of group themes or topics: for example, women and anger (Juntunen, Cohen, & Wolszon, 1997); reducing self-criticism (Phelps & Luke, 1995); women and self-esteem (McManus, Redford, & Hughes, 1997); college students and self-esteem (Perovich & Mierzwa, 1980); problem-solving and communication skills (McMillon, 1994); displaced homemakers (McAllister & Ponterotto, 1992); men (P. P. Heppner, 1983; Hetzel, Barton, & Davenport, 1994); and a living circle (Goodwin, 1983). These structured groups represent a rapidly growing arena of group work (Richards, Burlingame, & Fuhriman, 1990). Gazda and Brooks (1985) described a life-skills movement with three generations of groups directed toward a comprehensive taxonomy of social and life-skills training goals. These life-skills groups and others like them have been designed and

conducted as guidance and psychoeducational groups as well as counseling groups, or they may be a mixture of the two.

Leadership Challenges in Structured Groups

Career counseling groups confront leaders with unique leadership challenges. Group leaders often struggle with balancing content and process (Kraus & Hulse-Killacky, 1996), but the challenge is particularly significant in career counseling groups. Part of the reason for such a situation rests in the nature of the career development discipline itself. Throughout its history, career development has built its interventions on a set of assumptions that career choice is a product of rational, independent, fully conscious, and autonomous thought. Career counselors simply help individuals decide what they want to do with their life and then help devise strategies for carrying out such plans. Thus, interventions have often taken the form of information acquisition and provision, assessment, decision-making training, "true reasoning" advice and counsel, and job search practice. Little wonder that interventions have often taken the form of group guidance or psychoeducational sessions.

Need for Change. Several factors point to the importance of reconceptualizing career counseling groups. First, it is increasingly clear that career choice is not entirely rational (Brown, 1981; Krieshok, 1998; Krumboltz, 1998) and that information is not solely external (Moore & Haverkamp, 1989). Nor is career choice any longer considered solely a product of self-determination (Hansen, 1995), or seen as a product of autonomous thought outside the influence of the roles and expectations of significant others in the decider's life (Rockwell, 1987). Career counseling theorists and practitioners are abandoning their preoccupation with helping individuals make a single career decision as though it were a purely rational choice (Krumboltz, 1998), focused on a single role separate from other roles (Brown & Crace, 1996), and made once in a lifetime (McDaniels & Gysbers, 1992). "The current trend in group career counseling for adults seems to be toward the general and transferable rather than the specific and situational" (Zimpfer & Carr, 1989, p. 247). Career development is not a simple, sterile process. It is full of rationality, chance, emotion, risk, information, experience, and surprise. Thus, career interventions need to be sufficiently rich and flexible to meet a wide range of changing career development needs.

Structured theme groups have been criticized for a lack of integrity with regard to group size, time duration, and lack of sophistication in design (Brown, 1981; Drum, 1990; Richards et al., 1990). Obviously, there is a need for improvement in all aspects of group leadership, especially when it comes to career counseling groups. Without improvement, structured groups aimed

at serving as counseling groups fall short on group process and should be billed as the more information-focused career guidance group.

Restoring Group Process. Some career development needs can be met very effectively in psychoeducational groups in which group process expectations are less (and different), and information-sharing activities are more appropriate. However, some career development needs are more effectively met in career counseling groups. Counseling groups possess characteristics and properties distinctly different than psychoeducational groups. An analysis of the professional literature leads to a strong conclusion that career counseling group leaders have not trusted group process as much as they have group content. There is a growing consensus that leaders need to improve the integrity of group process in career counseling groups (Brown, 1981; Fuhriman & Burlingame, 1990b; Kivlighan, 1990; Richards et al., 1990; Winston et al., 1988).

Affective and Cognitive Needs. Indeed, restoration of quality leadership in career counseling groups must begin with a deeper appreciation of both career development and group work and a deeper commitment to quality group leadership (Winston et al., 1988). Group leaders must understand that career development needs are affective as well as cognitive. Emotional involvement in the group can be very growth enhancing (Kivlighan, Johnsen, & Fretz, 1987; Mawson & Kahn, 1993; Yalom, 1985). Our goal should not be to achieve the maximum comfort level of group members, as some have suggested with structured groups, but rather to use both challenge and support creatively to facilitate the members' growth and change. If comfort is achieved at the expense or possible exclusion of the anxiety that sometimes accompanies or produces change, then it is too costly. Group leaders often need sensitively to nudge members out of their comfort zones. Moderate anxiety can, in fact, motivate and facilitate change (Hill & Spokane, 1995). Emotional experiences can serve to enhance cognitive understandings (Cochran & Rabinowitz, 1983), especially with groups comprising members with untapped or unused affective abilities (Heppner, 1981). Interestingly, group members seem to appreciate the role of affect more than career counseling researchers (Kivlighan, Johnsen, & Fretz, 1987). Career counseling groups do not need to be restricted to information exchanges or safe "games" or to nonanxiety producing exercises. Rather, a leader's goal ought to be to use the unique power of the group modality to help members learn more about themselves and others in relation to career development needs in both cognitive and affective areas.

Further, there is a need to broaden our goal beyond mere decision making (Krumboltz, 1998). Decidedness may not be healthier than an informed uncertainty. Developing a healthy attitude of exploration is a far more endorsable goal than to help group members make a single decision (Blus-

tein, 1997). Too often groups have emphasized rational decisiveness, resulting in premature foreclosure (pseudocrystallization), short-sightedness, or restricted development.

Group Planning Guidelines. Restoration of the group process in career counseling groups requires group leaders to possess a working knowledge of fundamental career development principles. Theme-specific expertise in career development is a fundamental requirement of effective leadership (Drum, 1990). Prospective group leaders should be familiar with common theoretical postulates. It is not that the leader must be a content expert but rather that the leader should have a grasp of common desirable career development outcomes appropriate for the members of the group. Similarly, if the group is to be directed toward a particular theme or topic, then the leader ought to be knowledgeable about developmental stages or incremental steps associated with the target behavior(s). Beyond theme-related content and process knowledge, career counseling group leaders need to be able to use effectively and interpret a series of assessment instruments and demonstrate a relatively high level of expertise in working with appropriate resources. These two competency areas are somewhat unique to career development and are therefore fundamental expectations for all group leaders. Other competency areas are covered in the comprehensive standards and practice guidelines approved by the two professional associations most directly related to the topic of career counseling groups, the National Career Development Association (NCDA, 1992) and the Association for Specialists in Group Work (ASGW, 1992). Interestingly, there is only minor mention in each of the documents about the content of the other. In other words, in the NCDA document there is virtually no distinction made between individual and group counseling competencies; similarly, there is only a brief referral to career development in the ASGW document. Even a national survey of career counselors resulted in little or no mention of specific career counseling group work behaviors (Sampson, Vacc, & Loesch, 1998). Nonetheless, career counseling group leaders are responsible for developing expertise pertaining to each process-outcome area separately and to the two combined.

Knowledge provides a solid basis for good group planning. For example, it is important that career counseling group leaders understand the richness of the research reported by Blustein (1989, 1997) on the relationship of attachment theory, ego identity, and career exploration. Armed with the knowledge that there seems to be a relationship between an exploratory attitude and an early attachment history, group leaders have the opportunity to design appropriate group activities. When a counselor is faced with the task of developing a structured career exploration group, there is no substitute for a depth of knowledge about the exploration process at various ages and stages. Effective

groups must be based on substantial knowledge, not gimmicky activities. The integrity in career group work is a natural result of knowledge, skill, and supervised experience.

Composition: Screening for Readiness. Effective career counseling group leaders use screening interviews to aid in the group composition process. Pre-group interviews enable group leaders to assess prospective members' levels of readiness for the group (Burlingame & Fuhriman, 1990; Kivlighan, 1990). Such interviews can dramatically affect the favorableness of the group's composition by affording the identification and comparison of the compatibility of needs and goals of prospective members with any predetermined goals of the leaders. At screening interviews, leaders have opportunities to establish general expectations and begin the process of eliciting cooperation, building group identity, and setting a foundation for group cohesion. Most important during the interview, leaders can assess such characteristics as personality types to match with intended process parameters. For example, Kivlighan, Hageseth, Tipton, and McGovern (1981) conducted a study in which they compared results of two structured groups set up by matching type of group process with the members' Holland's typologies (Holland, 1985). The results confirmed that congruence of members' typologies (people-oriented vs. task-oriented) enhanced the effectiveness of the structured groups (learning through interpersonal discussions vs. learning through relatively independent self-exploration exercises).

Unfortunately, the pregroup screening interview is often bypassed by group leaders. In fact, in their comprehensive meta-analysis of career counseling group studies, Oliver and Spokane (1988) "did not review a single study that used an intake procedure to assess pretreatment motivation or preferences for counseling" (p. 458). Such a neglect is exceptionally problematic in light of the findings that prospective members with poor self-esteem, poor sociability, and goal instability seem to be candidates who might benefit more by participating in personal counseling on a one-on-one basis rather than in career counseling groups (Oliver & Spokane, 1988; Robbins, 1987). Further support for such a determination is offered by Drum and Lawler (1988), prominent leaders of the structured group movement, who share a belief in the importance of assessing readiness and need for assistance prior to group assignment.

Finally, Poey (1985) offered the belief that prospective group members ought to present with at least some aspect of their problem or expressed need as interpersonal in nature. A psychoeducational group leader with a sizable group may be able to make a uniformity assumption regarding prospective members' needs or readiness and get away with it, because of the group's plan. However, a career counseling group leader should avoid making the "uniformity assumption" (Kivlighan, Hageseth, Tipton, & McGovern, 1981).

Not everyone prefers structure (Miller, Mahaffey, Wells, & Tobacyk, 1995), nor does everyone benefit in the same way from the same degree of structure or at the same stage of the group process (Fuhriman & Burlingame, 1990a).

It is important to remember that regardless of age or stage, one's career is one's own. Each person is, in the end, responsible for his or her career. Acceptance of that responsibility establishes a baseline for effective involvement in a small group (Butcher, 1982). Without the aid of the valuable needs assessment information that can be gained from intake interviews, leaders run the risk of ending up over-confident in their knowledge of the members' needs (Kraus & Hulse-Killacky, 1996). Uninformed planning can also result in the leader's excessive reliance on some technique that may have little to do with the real needs of the present members or on one that is billed as a one-size-fits-all exercise (Winston et al., 1988).

Group Leadership. Along with group composition and preplanning, little in group work is more important than the quality of leadership. An effective leader understands and trusts group process (Conyne, 1997). Critics point to this area of group leadership as the area in need of the greatest change for career counseling group leaders (Fuhriman & Burlingame, 1990b; Kivlighan, 1990; Mawson & Kahn, 1993). Career counseling group leaders have set too many limits on their abilities to use group process. They have done so by being overzealous in their sanctioning of content that is deemed acceptable in the group. Starting with an assumption that career choice and career planning are fully rational and logical, leaders have often sanctioned only cognitive exchanges as appropriate for group interaction. The work by Kivlighan and his colleagues (1981, 1987, 1990) in illuminating the differential valuing of therapeutic (curative) factors in career groups by leaders and researchers on the one hand, and by group members on the other, leads to the conclusion that group process variables must come to the forefront in career counseling groups. Kivlighan (1990) found that group members valued most highly the factors of catharsis, universality, cohesion, and instillation of hope, whereas the leaders and researchers have focused almost exclusively on the factors of self-understanding, self-disclosure, and guidance. The quality of member-to-member interaction is just as important in career counseling groups as in other groups.

Although other traditional aspects of effective group leadership apply equally to the leadership of career counseling groups, I cite here only the unique importance of establishing a group structure that is sufficiently loose and flexible to allow the leader to facilitate the group's natural evolution. Intentional structure can be stifling if designed too tightly. To reiterate a point made earlier, the leader needs to be in position, even in a career counseling group, to shift continuously the balance of process and outcome orientation to enable the group members to stay on task while honoring the relationships of

members. Too often career counseling leaders sanction only task-oriented behaviors at the expense of group development.

One of the most defining characteristics of theme-centered, structured groups is the time limitation. The intentional structure that defines career counseling groups is most heavily influenced by the fact that the group has an identifiable end point. Unlike some of the more traditional in-patient groups that functioned on a time schedule seemingly without end, career counseling groups, like other theme-centered groups, average 13 sessions in length, with most sessions 90 min each (Burlingame & Fuhriman, 1990). Therefore, there is a natural time parameter. The leadership challenge is to take full advantage of all allotted time without being excessively controlled by time limits. One way of effectively meeting that challenge is to establish a structure that has several options and directions at predictable choice points, namely, group development stages. By planning multiple action strategies, group leaders can remain focused on facilitating the natural development of the group without pressures to conform to a preplanned structure.

The group leadership activities offered below are presented as a sample outline of an intentionally structured career counseling group. Resource ideas for directing group interaction are organized in a group stage sequence. A leader can select activities from the appropriate stage to meet the evolving needs of the group members. Action methods were developed or selected on the basis of their potential for eliciting member-to-member involvement on both cognitive and affective dimensions of career development. Sequencing and pacing decisions would naturally depend on the needs as experienced. The specific ideas included are presented only as suggestions and are briefly described. Each subgroup of activities focuses on the types of interaction that have the most therapeutic potential for groups at that particular stage. Because all activities are designed with a population in mind, the resource ideas offered are for a college population of sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

An Outline for an Intentionally Structured Career Counseling Group

Upperclass collegians confront graduation with a myriad of emotions. Some seem reluctant to leave the security of the familiar and comfortable campus world. Others are excited about starting out on their careers, eager to pursue their dreams. Still others are simply unsure about what they want or can do next, and then, of those there are some who may be full of imagined horrors of what fate may bestow upon them against their will. Finally, there are some who look backward and direct feelings of anger and resentment toward institutions and social structures that they believe have used them and abused them by not enabling them to choose from among a wide variety of prime positions. These feelings can be understood as illusions of both safety

and danger found commonly in young adults—an illusion of safety in the known, and danger in the unknown. Nonetheless, illusory or real, these feelings create an uneasy place for many of that age and place. Career counseling groups offer these students an opportunity to join with others like themselves in a multifaceted effort to deal with some of the issues and concerns that typically accompany initial career entry.

Optional activities are presented in a sequential order by group development stage. The initial focus of the group leader is to engage the group members and to begin the process of goal ownership and modification. Although a predetermined goal has been set and discussed in the screening interviews, it is important to allow for shifting and modifying during the initial stage of group development. That is sometimes lost in structured groups in which some leaders hold on too dearly to the exact direction and intent of the pre-group goal. Moderate changes can only help. As in all groups, basic ground rules, originally discussed in the screening interviews, are briefly covered again. Leaders need to attend to pacing to ensure that group members are encouraged to take moderate risks that contribute to their growth and to the cohesion of the group. Activities should be selected on the basis of member readiness and applicability. Some may take a small part of a session, whereas others may take a full session or two. In actuality, the same activity, used in two different groups, likely takes a different amount of time, depending on the leader's decision. Much depends on the evolution of the group and its changing needs in relation to the consensual goal. If possible, it is helpful to hold the group sessions in a career resource center (Kerr, 1982).

Formation–Exploration Stage

- Engagement—Joining Up

1. Triads: Life tasks wheel. Review of present life situation and satisfaction in key areas of love, work, and friendship. The idea is to start with the familiar (Patton, 1990)
2. Dyads: Best–worst–earliest job/responsibility (Daane, 1972)
3. Large group discussion: Rating of career myths and misconceptions
4. Split group: Most unique job in extended family or neighborhood
5. Becoming a natural explorer. Sharing career observations from movies and television roles

- Moderate Risks

1. Group Sharing: Presenting a problem (greatest worry or concern)
2. Role-play training: Talk show host and interviews with workers (Blatner & Blatner, 1991)

3. Sociometric approval and recommendations: Rating of significant others' feelings about self and career aspirations. Share with large group (Rockwell, 1987)

4. Serendipitous lifeline: Identify and share most salient experiences, including most serendipitous event (Krumboltz, 1998; Miller, 1993)

Transition Stage

• Building Commitment, Identification, and Cohesion

1. Attachment exercise: Intimacy sculpture (series of large group actions directed toward experiencing aspirations and messages of others regarding work and life-career expectations)

2. Vocational heritage: A family genogram (sharing of surprises/confirmations)

3. Early childhood observations and conclusions about work

4. Dual career geographical selection exercise: Choice conflicts (dyads)

5. Informational interviewing: Instruction, practice, execution, sharing (Williams et al., 1998)

6. Introduction to Internet surfing for career resources

Action—Work Stage

• Goal Achievement

1. Family sculpture: Depicting life roles (working, learning, playing)

2. Act like a man or a woman (gender and work). Demonstration and drama (Petitti, 1992)

3. Psychodrama: Group member issue(s) (Kellermann, 1987)

4. Becoming a more interesting person. Interviewing as a way of life

5. Feedback session(s): Cool Seat (Doane, 1972)

6. Lifestyle preferences: Family constellation contributions

7. Serendipitous investigator: Prepare for chance (Krumboltz, 1998)

8. Sociometric teams of interviewers. Practice (Bilaniuk, 1988)

9. Magic Shop: Life-career tools (Barbour, 1992). Preparing for action

Termination

• Closure

1. Whatdoyathink? "Publishing" action plans; identifying possible obstacles and strategies for solutions

2. Self-talk for handling rejection shock

Summary

Although career counseling groups have been shown to be effective in achieving goals related to increasing career maturity and career decidedness, those groups have been soundly criticized for a lack of adherence to group process standards of practice. This article contains support for the criticism as well as ideas for responding to the critiques.

Nonetheless, changes in graduate training programs are required if major progress in improving career counseling groups is to be made. Presently, even though groups are offered at more than 90% of Veterans Administration Medical Centers, community mental health centers, and college and university counseling centers, only 30% of American Psychological Association-approved training programs in clinical or counseling psychology require a course in group counseling theory, and an even smaller percentage require a group counseling practicum (Fuhriman & Burlingame, 1990a; Goodson, 1982). Further, a national survey of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited counselor training programs revealed that 92% of the institutions reported meeting the group counseling standards (Wilson, Conyne, & Ward, 1994); unfortunately, the standards only call for 10 clock hours of group counseling instruction and 10 clock hours of group leadership (Conyne, 1996). It seems fair to assume that virtually no graduate programs require supervised experience in leading career counseling groups. It is apparent that training programs, at best, are offering very basic course work in group counseling, and virtually none directly related to the leading of career counseling groups. "Currently, specialization almost certainly occurs after completing graduate education" (Dye, 1996, p. 180). It should be no surprise, then, to discover that graduates report significantly lower self-perceptions of ability in career counseling as compared to social-emotional counseling. "Our qualitative data, however, indicate that trainees who expressed negative views about their training were not saying they were receiving too little, only that the quality of the training was lacking" (M. J. Heppner, O'Brien, Hinkelman, & Flores, 1996, p. 119). Heppner and her colleagues concluded that there is a need for more creative and engaging instruction in the area of career counseling and more positive support and endorsement of career counseling from other faculty members.

In conclusion, it seems fair to say that if the quality of career counseling group leadership is suspect and if the graduate preparation of career group leaders is even more questionable, then we should be impressed with the positive impact career interventions have had to date. Imagine how effective those career counseling groups can become once leaders design and adeptly implement an intentionally structured approach comprised of sophisticated action methods.

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