

Running head: THE IMPACT OF A CAREER EXPLORATION GROUP

The Impact of a Career Exploration Group

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Abstract

The purpose of this investigation was to use a group approach to career counseling, to explore the career development process of eleventh grade students. The objective was to qualitatively assess the knowledge of self and occupational information, the role of significant others, education and work goals, and the decision making process. A five-week career exploration group was implemented. A pre-test and post-test was used to evaluate change. Significant change in participant's occupational knowledge, knowledge of self, influences, and education and work goals were unfounded. Participants did show a significant increase in the amount of time they spend in career exploration and in the amount of resources they utilized. There were more significant changes found in the female participants, which raised questions for further research.

The Impact of a Career Exploration Group

Since the career education discussions in the 1960's, helping young people determine a career direction has been the subject of ongoing debate (Collin & Young, 2000; Herr, 2003). Career planning is not an event, and most students will probably not make just one major career decision (Gullison, 1995). The average students' knowledge of himself/herself and the labor market is just too limited to feel very comfortable with making and committing to any single decision (Gullison, 1995). Career planning is a process that takes time and patience (Springer & Pevoto, 2003). For most people the period during and beyond high school is marked by important career decision making, that are like most in life irrevocable (Maduakolam, 2000). Many people are making this choice immaturely due to pressure, expectations, and peer group anxieties. Some battle between choosing an occupation and finding their full-time job, others are forced with choosing college course of study that will lead to a satisfying career. Many high school students in response to pressure make a definite career choice, and some may even commit themselves prematurely.

Today, the American School Counselor Association national standards for career development focus on helping students acquire developmentally appropriate career awareness, employment, readiness, and the knowledge and skills needed to achieve their goals (Cambell & Dahir, 1997). What does this mean for school counselors? In today's society the world of work is in a state of rapid transition (Osborn, Brown, Niles, & Minor, 1997). The information age, new technologies, and the trend toward downsizing have forced many individuals to make job and occupational changes (Osborn et al., 1997). In more recent decades changes in our society has resulted in many individuals reevaluating

their career goals and the meaning they derive from work. As a result, career development has become a continual process of making choices due to evolving self-concepts and occupational opportunities (Maccoby, 1981; Savickas, 1993).

A Review of the Literature

The purpose of this study is to assess the effects of a five week career exploration group on 11th grade student's career maturity levels, knowledge of self and occupational information, the role of significant others, education and work goals, and the decision making process. I will first begin with a brief discussion of the history of career counseling. Then I will discuss different career theories, their effectiveness, and how they have been applied to high school career development. Next I will discuss group counseling; how it can be applied to high school aged students; and how it may provide a successful alternative to career counseling 11th grade students.

Career Counseling

In ancient Greece work was regarded as a curse or a necessary evil reserved only for slaves and the poor, and believed that the aristocratic elite should avoid it. The whole concept of career is new, relative to history. In fact, the principle of having career is only about 100 years old. Before that, most people automatically adopted the occupations of their parents. Career choice was almost non-existent (Reardon, Lenz, Sampson, & Peterson, 2000). In 1908, Frank Parson created the Vocations Bureau in a neighborhood settlement house in Boston (Reardon et al., 2000). This three-step program guided job seekers in examining their personal characteristics and local employment options and then selecting the best job available (Reardon et al., 2000).

In the 1950's, career theorist expanded these ideas and promoted the idea that

career is not only an occupation or a job, but a lifelong process of deciding how one wants to live his or her life (Reardon et al., 2000). Super and Sverko (1995), explained that prior to the twentieth century, the term career, used to refer to the sequence of work-related positions in a person's working life. This ranged from blue-collar workers to professionals and managers (Super & Sverko, 1995). Since the beginning of the twentieth century, post World War II, career, has more recently been expanded to cover all major life roles, as well as those that relate to work (Super & Sverko, 1995).

Career counseling and guidance have emerged as a worldwide enterprise, with a common mission to help people manage and adapt to the psychosocial and cultural demands of work in their lives (Savickas, 2003). But today career counseling in high schools is lacking because there seems to be a national focus on the development and use of information technology that reinforces traditional matching of people and jobs (or colleges), and creating resumes, when more attention needs to be placed on self-awareness and holistic human development over the life span. Millions of dollars are being allocated to create the most advanced information systems, especially with the Internet, and to the development of the educational and vocational infrastructure to deliver these systems, and at the same time parents are beginning to ask why they gave 30 to 40 years of their lives to a job and neglected other parts of their life, especially as they find themselves downsized and unable to find jobs of comparable status, pay or security (Hansen, 2000). In this wish to technologise the career-planning process and fit people into jobs we are in a society that needs more interpersonal interactions. With the times changing rapidly, and career exploration of adults becoming so flexible, there is a need for more innovative forms of career counseling. Most career counseling, especially at the

high school level is restricted to what is known as psycho-educational or teaching.

Theorists, beginning with Parson's in the 1900's, have sought to improve our understanding of how people make career choices and solve career problems (Reardon, et al., 2000). Reardon et al. explained that much of this research has brought us to an understanding that both knowledge of yourself and educational and occupational options were used to create a match and specify an occupation. There are several different models that explain career choice and what is involved in the career decision-making process. Most career counselors base their work on a specific theory (Dorna, 2004). One of the most widely used constructs is John Holland's Type Theory (Dorna, 2004). Holland's theory is based on a six personality types that can be combined in a number of ways to best describe a person (Dorna, 2004). These personality types are: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Dorna, 2004). Reardon, Lenz, et al. provided a pyramid of information-processing domains in career decision making. This included Meta-cognitions, generic information processing skills, self-knowledge, and occupational knowledge. Whitely and Resnikoff (1978) provide a career decision-making model as a conceptual framework involving four parts. These parts include career awareness and career choice, the concept of career awareness, the skills of self-assessment and decision-making, and the making of actual decisions in career-forming situations. Healy (1975) explained that career decision-making involves six major areas, which include: self-awareness and self-esteem, planning and problem solving, and career information and work values. Following these models and several others career counseling has in the past been more geared toward psycho-education or teaching individuals or groups. There is a lack of research done on the effectiveness of a career

exploration group that focuses more working on ones self-awareness on knowledge of oneself to guide them in the career decision-making process. The research is consistent in the fact that ones self-awareness is a factor in the career decision-making process. It is a definite piece of the puzzle.

Most often, high school guidance is turning toward assessment instruments in the career development process (Springer, Stephen, Pevoto, and Barbara, 2003). Instruments like the Self-Directed Search, the Strong Campbell Interest Inventory, and numerous other instruments have dotted the landscape of testing, aiming to identify, the career-related interests of the youth, but helping people identify, gather, and interpret information to weigh occupational options involves more than test-based assessment (Healy, 1990). Technology, such as the computer driven instruments Discover, SIGI-Plus, GIS, and CHOICES, has also surfaced as a tool in career planning (Okacha, 1998). Such assessment tools have done an excellent service for students as well as counselors and teachers. Unfortunately, in some areas such instruments are not readily available or are too expensive for widespread use, and computer and Internet access are still limited (Springer et al., 2003). Students should be involved in the career counseling process, which helps promote confidence in decision-making and improves levels of self-efficacy (Springer et al., 2003).

The National Career Development Guidelines (NOICC, 1992) and the literature related to adolescent career development help counselors identify appropriate career development goals and interventions for high school students. The specific career development competencies identified as being appropriate for high school students are:

1. Self-knowledge

- A. Understanding the influence of a positive self-concept
 - B. Skills to interact positively with others
 - C. Understanding the impact of growth and development
2. Educational and Occupational Exploration
- A. Understanding the relationship between educational achievement and career planning
 - B. Understanding the need for positive attitudes toward work and learning
 - C. Skills to locate, evaluate, and interpret career information
 - D. Skills to prepare to seek, obtain, maintain, and change jobs
 - E. Understanding how societal needs and functions influence the nature and structure of work.
3. Career planning
- A. Skills to make decisions
 - B. Understanding the interrelationship of life roles
 - C. Understanding the continuous changes in male/female roles
 - D. Skills in career planning

Savickas (1999) proposed a career development intervention that fostered the sort of self-knowledge, educational and occupational exploration, and career planning described in the high school competencies. These interventions include: (a) orienting students' comprehension of careers, (b) developing students' competence at planning and exploring, (c) coaching students to develop effective career management techniques, and (d) guiding students in behavioral rehearsals to become prepared for coping with job problems. Several other forms of interventions in high school aged adolescence involve

the use of inventories, such as the Career Maturity Inventory (Crites, 1978) the Adult Career Concerns Inventory (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988), or the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1985). Using inventory items can orient students to the task they need to address to manage their career development effectively which helps provide a stimulus for planning and exploring behavior (Savickas, 1990).

In a recent study Springer and Pevoto (2003) suggested the use of the Career Knowledge Survey to assess the career development of Junior and Senior high school students. The instrument was developed by one of the authors whom outline its step-by step use. The philosophical basis of the instrument is based on four assumptions:

1. Informal guidance for adults and students is valuable as long as it is clear that the advice is not based upon standardized instruments.
2. If no formal guidance instruments are available, some form of guidance is more productive than having limited or no guidance to serve as a foundation for the career guidance process.
3. Requiring individuals to reason through various lifestyles and working conditions can narrow choices for employment or options requiring additional career information.
4. The key to testing does not lie solely within the validity and reliability of the instrument, but in the ability of the counselor or teacher to properly interpret the finding to the student and to encourage his or her continual progress in the career awareness process.

Springer and Pevoto (2003) discussed how the use of informal instruments such as the (CKS) can eliminate barriers such as lack of instrumentation and limited time to

deal with large numbers of students. They also explained that it eliminates the concern for the student's well-being outweighing the lack of funding to provide commercial instruments. But assessment tests should only be used as part of the counseling process and not as the entire therapy. Using an informal assessment tool may be useful to a counselor who is in a school system that may not have the funds or supplied with a formal assessment tool, such as the CMI, or the RIASEC scale, but assessment tools are only a part of counseling, and should be used as just one piece of the puzzle. There needs to be more research that combine the use of an assessment tool, whether formal or informal, in combination with counseling.

Poole and Goddard (2002) suggested a career development intervention in senior high schools, which included the implementation of a career center. They described a process used in Crow Hill High School [CHHS] Career Center, a prototype used in one western Canadian jurisdiction. The career center at [CHHS] included the following elements: self-assessment tools, occupational research, employment possibilities, goal setting, job search skills, and post-secondary research. They explained that career centers have been identified both nationally and internationally, and the processes used in career centers are varied; yet their elements remain virtually the same. Career centers were collaboratively implemented by counselors, career practitioners, and teachers (Poole & Goddard, 2002). This study showed a team approach to career counseling which is a complimentary combination of individual, group, and curricular intervention that provided an array of services to help a broad range of clients solve their career problems and make career decisions (Reardon, 1996). It also helped change the common perception that guidance counselors are solely responsible for the career development of

youth (Reardon, 1996). Unfortunately career centers are a risk and there are several potential barriers and resistors one must overcome to implement a successful center. A few concerns are staffing, potential space, funding and sustainability (Reardon, 1996). Many schools have budget restraint and a limited availability of professionally staffed career centers (Reardon, 1996). Another major concern with career centers is availability of space. Many schools are overpopulated and do not have any available space (Reardon, 1996). The funding and sustaining of career centers is also a major concern. Funds are usually disbursed from the school board, and it takes a great deal of time and advocating (Reardon, 1996).

According to Hood and Johnson, (1991) one of the biggest challenges for today's guidance system is how to best prepare our youth for success beyond their secondary school experience. They explained that this task is seemingly more difficult given the diverse nature of students within a given school population. They continued to explain that career counselors in the schools might assess and teach aspects of career interest, aptitudes, personality, knowledge of occupations, and other potentially relevant attributes. Krumboltz (1994) and Noeth, Engen, & Noeth (1984) explained that young people become aware of career opportunities and choices around them as they become exposed to friends and people around them, parents, occupations, role models, t.v. programs school programs, counselors and church and community programs etc. Counselors today, know that there is empirical evidence that counseling interventions do have a positive and measurable impact on students; educational and personal development (ASCA, 2002; Borders & Drury, 1992), and psycho-educational groups have long been used to promote career development (Pyle, 2000). Group career counseling has the ability to provide an

atmosphere that students can both become more self-aware, and obtain occupational knowledge through not only the counselor, but it's group members.

A review of the literature regarding career exploration groups to increase self-knowledge and to encourage educational and occupational exploration in high school age students, demonstrates that little research has been generated in this area. Groups range from providing information (group guidance) to counseling (group counseling) (Pyle, 2000) According to Healy (1975) career counseling differs from other kinds of counseling principally in its commitment to facilitating career growth. He defined career as the set of work-related positions occupied by the person over the course of his life. He defined career counseling as helping a person master any of the developmental tasks associated with work-related positions. Individual career counseling has many advantages. It involves a private relationship and tends to be more confidential, more individually focused, and highly sensitive to the needs of the student. One on one counseling makes it easier for the student to talk about sensitive areas and to discuss feelings that might not be appropriate or safe to express in front of a group. Individual counseling can however, be difficult for the child who feels pressure in a one-on-one situation.

Career counseling is, on the one hand, based on decades of research, with many approaches already reflecting established methodologies, instruments, and counseling practices, on the other hand there is a fundamental disagreement about which established methodologies, instruments, and counseling practices are most effective with clients (Whiteley & Resnikoff, 1978). Whiteley and Resnikoff (1978) explained that with the development of vocational, psychology as a scientific discipline, there has emerged during the past half century, the related yet distinct practice earlier known as

vocational guidance and more widely called career counseling. They continued to discuss a historical survey of vocational guidance and career counseling which reveals not one but several different approaches to assisting individuals with their choice of life's work.

Personal and career concerns are inextricably intertwined, and research by Niles and Anderson (1995) indicates that those in career counseling tend to have concerns related to uncertainty, ambiguity, self-efficacy, and personal, as well as occupational, information deficits. Career counseling clients also reported valuing the relationship dimension of career counseling experience and they often take advantage of the opportunity to discuss general concerns in the career counseling process (Anderson & Niles, 1995). Several researchers now conclude that there are few things more personal than a career choice and that the overlap between career and general concerns is substantial ((Anderson & Niles, 1995; Krumboltz, 1993; Subich, 1993).

Group Career Counseling

Through counseling, a client is empowered to use knowledge in developing skills and attitudes needed for mastering daily living (Healy, 1975). Counseling can occur in groups or in one on one situation. The essence of counseling is learning for personal development through interpersonal relationships. Reviewing the literature Career Counseling has a different face, and is outside of the realm of what many would consider "normal" counseling practices. Whether it is individual or group, career counseling remains focused on providing information to those that seek help, and less on personal development. Career counseling should focus more on expanding ones self-awareness, and less on providing students with an education, this can be successfully

accomplished using a group method.

According to Baumeister and Leary (1995) it is in our human nature to be social beings, and all people have a pervasive need to belong that is reflected in their desire to form and maintain relationships with others. Everywhere we go groups surround us. According to Yalom (1995) the way we act in these groups is a reflection of who we are as a person. Chen and Malincroft (2002) supported Yalom (1995) when saying that group therapy becomes a social microcosm as the “outside” relationship lives of clients are quickly manifested in their “inside” relationships with other group members and therapist. Yalom (1995) goes on to say that the way you act in your history will become evident in-group through your behavior. In group clients will share perceptions of themselves as well as their perceptions of others (Yalom, 1995). Chen and Malincroft (2002) explained that it is often discovered in group therapy that people will hold perceptions of themselves that are misrepresentative of others perceptions of them. They continue to say that these maladaptive patterns will be relieved in therapy group, through remaining in the here-and-now, and focusing on honest and open communication. Therefore a group setting will focus clients on the here-and-now interactions and encourage the exchange of feedback and perceptions among members (Chen & Malincroft, 2002). If group therapy is successful it will provide interpersonal learning (Chen & Malincroft, 2002). This interpersonal learning or self-awareness is a key element in the career development process.

Group counseling can provide several interpersonal relationships through which learning can take place; that is, clients can interact with peers and profit from peer modeling and reinforcement which would not be available in individual counseling

(Healy, 1975). According to Greenburg (2003) counseling groups in high school can be a rewarding experience for both group members and the counselor. He explained that high school students are mature enough to acquire insights into themselves and be responsive to counselors. He continued to say that they are going through a period of their lives in which they are required to make decisions that can affect their future (Greenburg, 2003). It is during the high school years, students mature physically, socially, and emotionally (Greenburg, 2003). Preparing to graduate from high school involves a number of emotions, ranging from excitement and happiness that their 12 years of school will be over, to doubts and anxieties about their futures (Greenburg, 2003). Being a member of a group will provide students with the opportunity to share some of these fears and doubts that they have in common, and will help reassure them that they are not alone.

One of the roles of the high school counselor is to help students prepare to move on to the next phase of their lives, and group career counseling, can be one method of accomplishing this objective. As adolescents pass through school and into the world of work, they must make choices among existing alternatives, inevitably foregoing some of their goals to achieve others which they value more (Healy, 1975). Ginzberg, Ginsberg, Axelrod, and Herma (1951) pointed out that in order to maximize the likelihood of selecting the most pleasing alternative at such a compromising point, a person needs to know his or her goals and potential. Feedback from group members can help students see themselves realistically and can give them the skill they need to make more informed decision.

Super (1953) stated that occupational choice is the implementation of the self-

concept; that is people select those occupations, which they believe, enables them to be the person they believe they are. Mahler (1969) stated that if young people are to have a real choice, both personally and professionally, in planning their futures, they must have help in learning how to better understand themselves, learning how to make wise decisions and solve problems and integrating their own personal growth with the increasing complexity of present day society. According to Healy (1975) Group counseling expands the possibilities for learning by multiplying the number of trusting interpersonal relationships; it delimits the concern which can be treated since groups focus only on these concerns which members share. He continued that in group counseling clients reinforce, question, and provide feedback to other clients. He also explained the importance of self knowledge in career development, and that leading theorist speculate that people who know their vocational qualities are more likely to achieve satisfaction in their careers. He explained that group counseling programs can be a reflective way for adults to learn how better to relate to the youth and to help bridge the communications gap between parents, administrator, teachers, counselors and students. He continued to state that schools can facilitate students' identity seeking by carefully planning group counseling programs to extend throughout the school years, and by giving test, exploring students abilities and interest, trying out work experiences and many other means, counselors can contribute much to the students; personal growth. He explained that this gives students the opportunity to reflect on their own values, actions, and choices, which is necessary for the development of a strong identity, and that a person with a strong identity is able to make decisions to use knowledge and facts in making value judgments and to handle vicissitudes of life in a capable and

intelligent manner.

Conclusion

In our American Society, graduation from high school signifies the completion of an educational as well as a developmental-maturational unit (Campbell, Walz, Miller, & Kriger, 1973). At the end of this unit the individual is expected to assume the responsibility for deciding the direction of his future personal and vocational life (Campbell et al., 1973). The individual experiences pressure from his parents, the school, potential employers, his peers, and other sources, all of which infringe on him/her in multiple directions, which can either result in productive meaningful and wise decisions on one hand, or confusion and distress on the other (Campbell et al., 1973).

Mahler (1969) stated that groups can reinforce a persons confidence in his own perceptions if, as in a group counseling each member is encouraged to recognize and express his own views and feelings, and pressure. He continued to explain that in group counseling, the acceptant and respecting atmosphere could be used to free individuals to examine their basic patterns of relating to others. He claimed that this would provide those in the group with the ability to explore patterns of relating to others, explore potentially more effective social patterns. Thus using group interaction will facilitate deeper self-understanding and self-acceptance, which is needed for career counseling. Mahler (1969) explained that group counseling is a unique form of counseling. Within the group there is also a need for a climate of mutual respect and acceptance so that individuals can loosen their defenses sufficiently to explore both the meaning of behavior, and new ways of behaving (Mahler, 1969).

To provide a well organized group counseling program in the school is potentially more effective than individual counseling, because the counselor is able to work with students longer and more intensively (Mahler, 1969). Several guidance books and counselor trainers call for a minimum of one session for each student during the school year. One single meeting is grossly inadequate when a student's future is on the line. A major goal of group counseling in schools is to develop relationships which will enable the counselor to meet the important developmental needs of students, to help with the identity seeking process, and a child's career development. There are several similarities and differences among individual and group process, and research shows both to be effective. Group methods would make it possible for counselors in the school (whose caseloads tend to be very large) to use their time more efficiently. High school age students would also benefit from group career counseling from sharing experiences with others and exchanging ideas about the handling of their problems. For some it may be helpful just knowing their problems are not unique (Hanson & Cramer, 1971). From the counselors point of view an enriched understanding of their counselees should result from the opportunity of seeing how they function in the group setting. Counselors in other settings, but especially in schools looked to group methods for valuable contributions to a total guidance and counseling program (Hanson & Cramer, 1971). Group vocational guidance continues to have a relatively low priority among school counselors in the high school. All though vocational guidance has for many years been conducted with groups of students, no significant research has been done to measure its effectiveness. Hanson and Cramer (1971) explained that generally group procedures have been restricted to variations of informational programs, which operate consistently

at the cognitive level. They stated that group vocational guidance offers a great opportunity for self-improvement having direct relevance to career decision-making and development. They continued to explain that self-understanding resulting from therapeutic experience in groups is crucial in the career development process. The group career process can be especially beneficial because everyone is likely to have liabilities that tend to hamper vocational development unless they are resolved early and personality integration is achieved (Hanson & Cramer, 1971). Participation in groups to consider common vocational problems can also help the individual in understanding and master these weaknesses (Hanson & Cramer, 1971). Therefore, skillfully conducted sessions can contribute to the growth of personal qualities needed for success in work life. According to Pyle (2000) Career development groups can be directive (information-didactic oriented) or nondirective (feeling affective oriented). He continued to explain that both types, depending on the need are beneficial.

The purpose of this investigation was to use a group approach to career counseling, to explore the career development process of eleventh grade students. The objective of this research was to qualitatively assess the knowledge of self and occupational information, the role of significant others, education and work goals, and the decision making process. How do adolescence utilize themselves and others in there career development process? Where are these influences coming from (media, school, parents, community, school counselor)? Are today's students prepared for rapid changing society and better prepared for career flexibility/adaptability.

Method

Participants

The participants (N=5) for the study were comprised of 5 students in grade 11 who were enrolled in a k-12 diploma bound program in a suburban school district in Western New York. The school district total enrollment grades k-12 was 1,171 students. Of the 1,171 students enrolled, 16 (1.4%) of the students were American Indian, Alaskan, Asian or Pacific Islander, 12 (1.0%) of the students were Hispanic, 1141 (97.4%) of the students were White/Caucasian, and 2 (0.7%) were Black/Non Hispanic. Students that were eligible for free and reduced lunch make up 21% of the district and 21-30% was on public assistance. The percentage of students that left the k-12, diploma bound systems and entered an alternative program leading to a high school equivalency in 2005-2006 school year were 4.3%. Of the 4.3%, 13 students (3.5%) dropped out, and 3 (0.8%) entered GED programs.

The student researcher entered 11th grade English and Global studies classes and invited any students enrolled in the 11th grade class (N=85) to participate in the study. A random sample method was eliminated since the procedure would have been disruptive to the typical school day. Of this group, seven signed up to join; and five returned the appropriate permission forms and completed the 10-item instrument (Career Exploration Inventory, see Appendix A), which was given as the pre-test and the post-test. Participants included three males and two females. All group members were Caucasian between the ages 16 & 17. Student participants were drawn from their 8th period classes (12:03-12:48). Each group session lasted approximately 42 minutes. The group met once a week for five consecutive weeks in the conference room on the second floor of the high

school. The start date was February 3rd, ending the group on Friday the 10th of March (Friday February 17th the group was canceled because of a snow day).

Procedure

The first group meeting began with the collection of statements of informed consent (Appendix B) statements of parental consent (Appendix C). Then a discussion of the group's purpose took place (sharing career goals, interest, thoughts, feelings, and the pre-test/post-test). The student researcher informed the participants of their rights as group members, and as research participants. The group established rules collaboratively. Some of the rules included: members taking turns to speaking so that everyone had a chance to share; be polite, and don't interrupt someone talking; and the importance of confidentiality; (what is said in the group stays in the group). Once rules were established the group began by welcoming the group members individually. Before the end, the group decided collaboratively on the day, time of day, and the number of times they would meet.

The second group began with a brief overview of the rules that were established. Next participants were given approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the pre-test. Once all participants completed the test, there was a brief period for questions or concerns about the test. Next, the student researcher facilitated a discussion about the meaning of the words career, job, and work. The group discussed what the terms meant to them for approximately fifteen minutes, and then the student researcher supplied a definition of the terms abstracted from the Merriam-Webster's online Dictionary (2006). The group concluded with discussions and concerns.

The third group began with a values sorting activity from Career Development

Interventions in the 21st Century. The activity was used to help students participants identify those values that are most important to them in their career development. The activity took approximately 20 minutes, and the remainder of time was used to process the activity. The student researcher first handed out the values list (as shown in Appendix D) and five slips of paper per participant. The participants were instructed to identify their top ten values from the list by putting an “X” next to the values that are most important to them. Then after a short discussion of these values participants were asked to identify their top 5 values from the list of their top 10 and write 1 value on each slip of paper, eliminating 5 of their values. At this point the student researcher went around and took away one value from each participant and the participants identified what the value meant to them. This process was continued for each remaining value. The participants used the last five minutes of the group for process, discussion, and feedback.

The fourth group began with an icebreaker Occupational Characteristics-Status/Prestige. This activity took approximately 30 minutes. The student researcher slightly changed the activity due to time constraints of the group. The activity was used to clarify personal perspective on the occupational attribute of social status or prestige; increase awareness of general societal view of occupational prestige; and to illustrate the effects of others; attitudes toward status/prestige on people choosing to enter an occupation (Pope & Minor, 2000). The activity involved ranking nine occupations (Appendix E) according to their importance in the American Society. Next, the participants created a sentence with three adjectives that describe each occupation, using the first things that come to mind. After each participant completed their sentences the student researcher surveyed the groups for rank. As a group we tallied the ranks and

concluded with a brief discussion of the reason for the ranks, and the reasons for the differences in the ranks.

The fifth and last group began with the post-test. Participants were given approximately 10-15 minutes to finish the 10-item questionnaire, followed by a brief discussion. The remaining time was used to discuss thoughts and feelings that have aroused, to provide feedback among group members, and to say goodbye.

Instrument

The study used a 10-item career exploration inventory, pre-test/post-test designed by the student researcher. The purpose of the inventory was to explore the career development process in 11th grade students by examining responses to open ended questions about themselves, influential others, goals, and decision making. The inventory was used twice to measure career development, evaluate career education, assess guidance needs, and to determine career maturity levels of the group prior to, and after the group.

Results

Data was analyzed by examining any change among participants pre-test and post-test. Participants (A, B, C, D, and E) were given the Career Exploration Inventory (Appendix A), a ten item open-ended questionnaire to complete in the first group meeting and in the last group meeting. The student researcher found there to be no significant change in any of the participant's answers to question 1 (What are your future career goals?). The student researcher defined significant to be a change in word use and in meaning attached to those words (i.e. on the pre-test participant A's future career goals were stated to be "college", and on the post-test she stated "I plan to attend college". On

the second question (How much time a week do you spend on career exploration, and what sources do you utilize?) the student researcher found significant change in all participant A, B, C, and D, and no change in participant E. The student researcher defined significant change in the amount of time spent per week as an increase of 1-2 hours. The student researcher defined career exploration as those activities that involve student's acquiring knowledge or skills related to a specific career. Participants A, B, C, D, and E all increased in the amount of sources they utilize. Participants A and E acknowledged only the use of the computer on the pre-test, and added at least one other source on the post-test. Participant B, C, and D all had acknowledged the use of the computer and one additional source on the pre-test, and on the post-test each increased the amount of sources by at least two, while participant D increased by three. On the third question (Who has been most influential/informative guiding you in your career exploration?) there was no significant change in any of the participants A, B, C, D, or E's answers. On the fourth question (How have your educators (teachers, administrator, and guidance counselors) exposed you to career exploration?) participants A, B, C, D, and E all showed a significant change in their answers. For example, on the pre-test participant A stated that "they talk to us about future jobs and colleges", and on the post-test participant A stated that "they give us tests to tell us what they think we're good at". On the fifth question (When you talk about future goals do you feel you are making an educated decision?) Participants A, B, C, D, and E showed no significant change. On question six (What are your interests and abilities in relation to your career choice? Include both academic and nonacademic.) Participant A showed a significant change in her interests and abilities in relation to career choice. On the pre-test participant A suggested a lack of knowledge of

her interest and abilities by leaving the question blank. On the post-test she shows growth, because she answers the question. Participants B, C, D, and E show no significant change in their interest and abilities. On question seven (What does career mean to you) the student researcher found no significant change in participants B, C, D, and E. Participant A showed a significant change in that on the pre-test she did not answer the question, and on the post-test she did. On question eight (What do you value in a job and why? (i.e.: money, prestige, flexibility, independence) the researcher found there to be no significant change in any of the participants. On question nine (What type of occupations are consistent with your work values?) Both participants A and B showed significant change in their answers. Both participants did not answer this question on the pre-test indicating a lack of knowledge, and both answered the question on the post-test. Participants C, D, and E showed no significant change. On the last question (Identify future and family goals and where they fit into your future career goals?) The student researcher found no significant change in any of the participants (A, B, C, D, and E's) answers.

Discussion

This study used the Career Exploration Inventory to qualitatively assess the knowledge of self and occupational information, the role of significant others, education and work goals, and the decision making process in high school juniors. Reviewing the literature there are several inventories used in career counseling, such as: the CMI (Crites 1978); Adult Career Concerns Inventory (Super, Thompson, & Lindeman, 1988); and the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1985). Using inventories can help counselors manage their student's career development, while providing students with a stimulus for planning

and exploring behavior (Savickas, 1990). Springer and Pevoto (2003) suggested the use of a Career Knowledge Survey to assess the career development of Jr. and Sr. high school students. The instrument was informal in that it was developed by one of the authors and had not been previously tested for reliability and validity. The use of such an instrument (CKS) can eliminate barriers such as lack of instrumentation due to funding (Springer & Pevoto, 2003). It is also suggested that these tools only be used as part of the process.

This study offered a view of using both an informal assessment tool (Career Exploration Inventory) and a five-week career exploration group to provide a productive way for career guidance in high school aged students (specifically 11th grade). According to Pyle (2000) groups may range from providing information (group guidance) to counseling (group counseling). This group was a mixture of both. The student researcher provided information to the group, yet implemented a group therapy setting. Chen and Malincroft (2002) suggested a group setting focused clients on the here-and now interactions and encouraged the exchange of feedback and perceptions among members. They continued to state that if group therapy is successful it will provide interpersonal learning, and this personal learning or self-awareness is a key element in the career development process. Several other researchers (Savickas, 2003; Reardon et al., 2000; Whitely and Resnikoff, 1978; Healy, 1975) all include self-awareness as an important part of the career development process.

Hood and Johnson (1991) suggested that career counselors in the schools might assess and teach aspects of career interest, aptitudes, personality, knowledge of occupations and other potentially relevant attributes. Healy (1975) discussed the transition of adolescence from school to the world of work, and the choices in which they

must make. Ginzberg, et al., (1951) pointed out that in order to maximize the likelihood of selecting the most pleasing alternatives at such a compromising point a person needs to know his or her goals and potential feedback from group members can help students see themselves realistically and can give them the skill they need to make more informed decisions.

Data identifying more self-awareness: career goals; the decision making process; interest and abilities; work values; and family values were all discussed. In general attitudes related to career goals, interest, work values, the decision-making process, and abilities did not show significant change. There may be several reasons for this. The group was a small group that was comprised of volunteers. These volunteers had to sacrifice time out of their busy days to join the group. This indicates that career exploration was a priority to them and that perhaps this group had all ready done some exploration on their own. The group was also limited in time. Each group was conducted during eighth period. This period was a short period in the school day, because it was a lunch period. The group was also limited in the number of weeks it ran. The group ran for five weeks, but the first and last group was strictly used to implement the Career Exploration Inventory (pre-test/post-test). The lack of length of the group could be a factor in the lack of change in these areas.

The NOICC (1992) identify appropriate career development goals and interventions for high school age students as identifying the skills to locate, evaluate, and interpret career information. Each participant (A, B, C, D, and E) showed a significant increase in the amount of time they spend on career exploration, and in the types of resources they utilize. This may be a result of availability and knowledge. Prior to the

group the participants may have been unaware of the availability of resources. Or the career exploration group may have provided these participants with motivation to begin exploring and with the ability and education to explore more on their own. This suggests that students are apprehensive in the career development process; because they do not know what resources are available to them.

Both female participants A and B showed an increase in their understanding of career and in the types of occupations that are consistent with their work values. The three male participants showed little change in any of the identifying areas. This has several implications. This may imply that career related education is more geared toward the male population. Or females may not investigate career education as early as the male population. Females may be less mature than males in the career development process.

Overall the results implicate more significant change in the female members of the group's career development. This may be contributed to several factors. The females may have been more invested in the group than the males. The females may have been more open and honest in the group, and took part in the exchanging of feedback. The females may have taken more time outside of the group for process and development. Or the females had less of a grasp on their career development going into the group so they had more room for change. This indicates that the male sample of the group did have a good grasp on their career development and had less room for change.

Limitations

Time constraints may have been a limiting factor. The group ran for five weeks, the first week and the last devoted to the Career Exploration Inventory, leaving only three remaining weeks for interventions. Also the participants entering the group were

volunteers. These students were unique to the rest of the population in that they had the desire to take the time to explore in their futures, and had done so prior to the group.

Another limitation was the sample size. The sample available to the researcher was limited to five, and was not representative of the population. The sample also lacked in diversity. The sample consisted of all White/Caucasians participants with a suburban middle class background. Another limitation was the reliability and validity of the Career Exploration Inventory. This inventory was designed by the student researcher and was not previously tested for reliability or validity. Also, the questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions, which leaves room for interpretation in the intended meaning.

Implications

These findings raised several questions concerning knowledge and influences that students have in regards to career development. More specifically concerns within the female population, and their career development process. Future research may want to focus a study on women, and where they are in their career awareness. Also results showed a significant change in the amount of time and resources students utilize in their career development process. A follow-up to provide further research on the continuation of the career development in these students is recommended. In the future a similar study expanding over ten weeks is suggested.

Findings suggested that change did occur, but further research needs to be done to evaluate the reasons for change. Possible challenges and deficits in the study are recognized. Researcher biases may be reflected in the interpretation of the inventory. The inventory consisted of open-ended questions in which the researcher interpreted. Another researcher may possibly interpret the inventory differently. Also the researcher

acknowledges the limitations of the inventory. Several questions contain parenthetical references, which may have guided some of the participants' answers. For further studies the elimination of open-ended questions is suggested.

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Appendix A

Career Exploration Inventory

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability!

1. What are your future career goals (i.e.: college, job market, trade school)?

2. How many hours a week do you spend on career exploration, and what sources do you utilize?

3. Who has been the most influential/informative guiding you and your career exploration?

4. How have your educators (teachers, administrators, guidance counselors) exposed you to career exploration?

5. When you talk about your future goals do you feel you are making an educated decision, and why?

6. What are your interest and abilities in relation to your career choice? Include both

academic and non-academic.

7. What does career mean to you?

8. What do you value in a job and why? (i.e.: money, prestige, flexibility, independence)

9. What type of occupations is consistent with your work values?

10. Identify future and family goals and where they fit into your future career goals.

Appendix B

Statement of Informed Consent

The purpose of this research is to study the efficiency of group career counseling in high school aged adolescents. It is being conducted to fulfill requirements for a graduate course in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. This research is being conducted by taking a random sample of volunteer 11th grade students at Warsaw Central School. Student respondents will take part in a five-week career exploration program. A pre-test and post-test will be given to all student respondents. My goal is to examine how high school age children utilize themselves and others in their career development process. This includes their knowledge of themselves and occupational information, the role of significant others, their education and work goals, and their decision making process.

In order to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not to participate in the project. If you want to participate in the project, and agree with the statements below, please sign below. You may change your mind at any time and leave the study without penalty, even after the study has begun.

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My confidentiality and my organization's confidentiality are guaranteed. There will be no way to connect responses to me or to my organization.
3. There will be no anticipated risks or benefits because of my participation in this project.
4. My participation involves group career exploration with a small group of students (8-9) and the administering and evaluating of a pre-test/post-test to student respondents.
5. The results will be used for the completion of a class project thesis, in Course EDC 707 (Implementation I & II - School Counselor) at SUNY Brockport.
6. Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office in the Counseling Center at Warsaw Central School. Data and Consent forms will be destroyed by shredding at the end of the Spring 2006 Semester.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study realizing I may withdraw without penalty at any time during the five-week process. Completion of this form indicates my consent to participate.

If you have any questions you may contact:

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Faculty Supervisor | Susan Seem Ph.d
(585) 395-5492 | email: sseem@brockport.edu |
| Faculty Supervisor | Thomas Hernandez Ed.D
(585) 395-2366 | email: thernandez@brockport.edu |
| On-Site Supervisor | Sherri Bartz
(585) 786-8000 ext.2506 | |
| Student Researcher: | Sara Munger
(585) 584-9931 | email: smunger.1@netzero.com |

Signature of Consent: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C
Statement of Parental Consent

The purpose of this research is to study the efficiency of group career counseling in high school aged adolescents. It is being conducted to fulfill requirements for a graduate course in Counselor Education at SUNY Brockport. This research is being conducted by taking a random sample of volunteer 11th grade students at Warsaw Central School. Student respondents will take part in a five-week career exploration program. A pre-test and post-test will be given to all student respondents. My goal is to examine how high school age children utilize themselves and others in their career development process. This includes their knowledge of themselves and occupational information, the role of significant others, their education and work goals, and their decision making process.

In order for you child to participate in this study, your informed consent is required. You are being asked to make a decision whether or not your son/daughter is able to participate in the project. If you want your son/daughter to participate in the project, and agree with the statements below, please sign below. You may change your mind at any time and withdraw your child from the study without penalty, even after the study has begun.

I understand that:

1. My child's participation is voluntary and he/she has the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My child's confidentiality and the organization's confidentiality are guaranteed. There will be no way to connect responses to him/her or to the organization.
3. There will be no anticipated risks or benefits because of my child's participation in this project.
4. My child's participation involves group career exploration with a small group of students (8-9) and the administering and evaluating of a pre-test/post-test to student respondents.
5. The results will be used for the completion of a class project thesis, in Course EDC 707 (Implementation I & II - School Counselor) at SUNY Brockport.
6. Data will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office in the Counseling Center at Warsaw Central School. Data and Consent forms will be destroyed by shredding at the end of the Spring 2006 Semester.

I am the parent/guardian of _____. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my child's participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree my son/daughter's participation in this study, realizing he/she may withdraw without penalty at any time during the five-week process. Completion of this form indicates my consent to my child's participation.

If you have any questions you may contact:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Faculty Supervisor | Susan Seem Ph.d
(585) 395-5492 email: sseem@brockport.edu |
| Faculty Supervisor | Thomas Hernandez Ed.D
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| On-Site Supervisor | Sherri Bartz
(585) 786-8000 ext.2506 |
| Student Researcher: | Sara Munger
(585) 584-9931 email: smunger.1@netzero.com |
| Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ | Date: _____ |

Appendix D

VALUES LIST

- _____ GOOD FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
- _____ FINANCIAL SECURITY
- _____ JOB SECURITY
- _____ A WORLD THAT IS FREE OF DISCRIMINATION
- _____ CREATIVITY
- _____ HAVING A SET ROUTINE
- _____ TIME BY MYSELF
- _____ COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES
- _____ PHYSICAL APPEARANCE
- _____ VARIETY
- _____ POWER
- _____ RECOGNITION
- _____ PRESTIGE
- _____ FREEDOM FROM STRESS
- _____ ASSOCIATING WITH PEOPLE I LIKE
- _____ SUCCESS
- _____ FREEDOM TO LIVE WHERE I CHOOSE
- _____ LEISURE TIME
- _____ FAME
- _____ STRONG RELIGIOUS FAITH
- _____ ADVENTURE
- _____ WORLD PEACE
- _____ HELPING OTHERS
- _____ HAVING CHILDREN
- _____ GOOD HEALTH
- _____ A BEAUTIFUL HOME
- _____ AUTONOMY
- _____ OTHER

Appendix E

OCCUPATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Instructions: First, rank order the occupations according to their importance in society. Second, list three adjectives that describe each occupation.

____ Clerks in store are...

____ Electricians are...

____ Filling station attendants are...

____ Garage mechanics are...

____ Janitors are...

____ Lawyers are...

____ Owners of a factory employing 100 people are...

____ Physicians are...

____ Police officers are....