

Career Self-Help Advice and Labor Market Changes in the U.S.*

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[Abstract]

This paper examines career self-help literature in the U.S. with regard to white-collar job market changes. In the past few decades, American white-collar workers have experienced huge changes in the labor market such as frequent layoffs and unstable employment, which often means they need to engage in job-hunting at any time. In this context, career self-help advice has come to influence the unemployed and the employed alike, offering job-hunting strategies and shaping popular expectations about work and career.

Given this influence, this paper looks at career self-help advice by focusing on one of the main features that characterizes the genre, the emphasis on the pursuit of one's dream job, and what this reveals about the changes in the white-collar labor market. This is accomplished by looking at *What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers* by Richard Bolles, which, as the all-time bestselling career self-help literature, is representative of career self-help advice. In particular, the book has been annually updated since 1975 and is likely to register the upheavals in the job market. Accordingly, this paper examines the changes in its central career advice over the years, especially the growing emphasis

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on following one's dream job, and makes sense of such changes in light of white-collar job market conditions. In doing so, the paper shows that career self-help advice reflects as well as serves the precarious employment condition of American white-collar workers today.

Key Words: *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, job market, career self-help, white-collar, dream job

1. Introduction

This paper aims to examine career self-help literature in the U.S. with regard to job market changes for white-collar workers. In the past few decades, American white-collar workers—it may be safe to say the majority of them are ethnically white—have experienced huge changes in the job market, as downsizing, outsourcing and various forms of restructuring have swept through corporate America. In the aftermath, white-collar layoffs and unstable employments have become commonplace, while the duration of unemployment also increased from less than ten weeks in 1970 to over 24 weeks in 2009 (Lane 10). In the years after World War II, layoffs were largely confined to blue-collar workers or those with limited education, but now economic downturn affects a greater number of white-collar workers than before. For example, the unemployment rate for college-educated white-collar workers has grown faster than that of blue-collar workers or those without college education, reaching record-high in 2009 (Sharone 5-7). Among the long-term unemployed—those without a job more than 27 weeks—the share of white-collar workers rose from about 30% in 2003 to nearly 50% between 2007 and 2009 (Lane 43).

Given these labor market conditions, most white-collar workers, whether they are currently employed or not, are potentially job seekers and need to be prepared to go job-hunting on a moment's notice. In this context, according to Ofer Sharone, the career self-help industry has rapidly grown alongside job market changes for white-collar workers. Dispensing career advice and job search tips to increasingly anxious and insecure white-collar workers through various channels such as books, workshops, boot camps, support organizations for job seekers and coaching services, the career self-help industry helps job seekers make sense of the situation they are in and how they go about job search (Sharone 22). Indeed, *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream* by Barbara Ehrenreich shows that career self-help advice is often the most readily available source of job search wisdom and offered as if common sense.

Although this is not to say that career self-help advice is blindly followed, such advice does have great influence on the employed and the unemployed alike. In light of this influence, this paper intends to examine career self-help advice and how this reflects job market changes by focusing on *What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual to Job-Hunters and Career-Changers* (hereafter *Parachute*) by Richard Nelson Bolles. As the bestselling career self-help guide first published in 1970, *Parachute* is arguably the most influential career self-help advice. Having been revised each year since 1975, it is also marked by both changes and constancy over the years. Being a career advice manual, it is very likely that *Parachute's* annual editions register the upheavals in the job market.

Accordingly, this paper sets out to uncover changes in *Parachute* by looking at one of the most influential discourses shaping popular expectations on work and career, i.e., finding one's dream job. In fact, the ideal of a dream job is at the heart of *Parachute* and career self-help advice as a whole. According to Steven Vallas and

Emily Cummins (6), the pursuit of self-fulfillment through one's dream job is one of several themes that characterize career self-help genre. Sharone similarly identifies the emphasis on a dream job as the main feature which, among others, sets career self-help discourse apart from that of staffing agencies that prescribe job seekers to have "realistic expectations." Moreover, the ideal of a dream job appeals to white-collar job seekers, as it promises a meaningful and fulfilling career at a time when they, unappreciated and unwanted, can be laid off at any time (41-45).

Given this context, this paper intends to examine the text of *Parachute* to find out how its central career advice of doing what one likes to do, or one's dream job, has changed over the years. It especially intends to look at how the advice of following one's dream has been increasingly emphasized and what this reveals about white-collar job market changes. By examining this, the paper tries to show how career self-help advice responds to white-collar job market changes, reflecting as well as serving the shifting economic tenor of its times.

Before reviewing these changes, as a way to contextualize such changes, the paper first presents a brief overview of *Parachute* and its core job search advice that remains constant throughout different annual editions. It then explores some of the major changes made to its central career advice, especially the growing emphasis on pursuing one's dream job, by examining selected editions of *Parachute* available in Korea. Finally, the paper tries to make sense of such changes in light of the shifts in white-collar job market conditions.

2. Finding a Job in Parachute Way

Parachute was initially self-published in 1970 as a 168-page spiral bounded booklet. As an Episcopalian minister doing counseling work at college for the Protestant United Ministries in Education, Bolles saw people have difficulty getting a job and keeping it (McGee 112). He also observed some of his friends, trained to do only one thing, were out of work and found their skills no longer wanted (x [2011]). *Parachute* was Bolles' effort to help them find alternatives to the conventional ways of job-hunting. According to him, the book's title came from the conversation with his friends, who would say "I am gonna bail out," to which he would respond, "What color is your parachute?" (xi [2006]). As the book's subtitle indicates, it is designed for both job-hunters and career-changers (it treats a job-hunt the same as a career change), while "manual" suggests its practical orientation.

Bolles at first mailed *Parachute* to members of the clergy, but soon began getting orders from various communities across the country. By 1972, it was published by Ten Speed Press and its sales picked up gradually. In 1979, the book landed on the *New York Times* paperback bestseller list and appeared on the list for more than 5 years in total (xii [2001]), eventually becoming the all-time bestselling book in career self-help. By 2010, it sold over 10 million copies and translated into 20 languages (x [2011]). As Micki McGee points out (113), the timing of *Parachute*'s publication is critical to its success, as it corresponded with the rising unemployment rate in the U.S. Between 1955 and 1974, the unemployment rate was around 3% to 6%, but it climbed to nearly 10% in 1983. *Parachute* was also helped by a new direction at the US Office of Education in the early 1970s, calling for "career education" in the K-12 school system.

It is no exaggeration to say *Parachute* created the career self-help genre almost

single-handedly, as its success demonstrated the existence of a demand for career guides. According to Bolles, when *Parachute* came out in 1970, there were only 13 books in what could be roughly called the career change and job-hunting field (xi [2011]). Vallas and Cummins also note the shift *Parachute* brought (5). Up until the early to mid-1980s, mass-market books devoted to business and careers largely catered to corporate managers seeking to release creativity in the firm. From the late 1980s and following *Parachute*'s success, however, the field expanded to aim at employees concerned with their positions in the labor market. As a result, not only are there numerous career advice books, but many of the successful ones including *Parachute* come to be published in versions for specialized groups such as teens and women.

As of 2015, it is still used by job search support groups like a “Job Search Support Group” in Cupertino, California, as a central resource for encouragement and a practical job-hunting guide (Bolles 92 [2015]). Its advice—treating job search as a full-time job, pursuing one’s dream, being positive, to name just a few—is also echoed in the job search support group studied by Sharone (38-45) and in the institutions Ehrenreich ran into in her job search (46-47). Interestingly, *Parachute*'s initial success resulted in the decision in 1975 to revise it every year to keep it up to date. Accordingly, new annual editions have been issued from 1976 on, sometimes with substantial additions, and the original 168 pages swelled to over 500 pages by 1997 (McGee 113).

Amid annual revisions, *Parachute*'s central arguments remain constant. From the beginning, *Parachute* has emphasized the frequency with which job-hunting occurs in the U.S. and Bolles provided expert estimates or some statistics in this regard. For example, the average American worker is expected to go job-hunting every one-and-a-half years, if under 35 years of age, and every three years, if over 35, and

is likely to change careers three to five times in his or her lifetime. In another instance, Bolles puts that the average job in America lasts for “exactly” 3.6 years, and the average worker works for ten different employers in his or her lifetime. All this points out that job-hunting and career change is a repetitive activity one may have to do at any time. Given this, Bolles argues that mastering a job search strategy is not an optional pursuit, but a necessary survival skill (x [1979]; xi [1983]; 12 [2006]).

Yet, the problem Bolles has never failed to mention throughout annual editions is that the traditional job search strategy—i.e., sending out resume (later posting it on the internet included), answering job postings, and going to employment agencies—has a very low success rate, 7% for sending out resumes, for example (12 [2008]). It is outdated and “Neanderthal,” unable to offer any systematic ways to job search other than the “number games,” i.e., sending out as many resumes as possible. Its “Neanderthal-ness” means that employers also have difficulty finding good employees. At its best, the traditional method can give you a fish this time, but with no clues as to how you can go about job-hunting when it is required next time. More often than not, it gets no fish at all and repeated rejections often leave you in “rejection shock,” leading you to think something is wrong with you, when the job search strategy is the problem, and doing irreparable damage to your self-confidence (x [1979]; 10-13 [1991]; 295 [1993]).

In direct opposition to this, Bolles presents *Parachute* job search method informed by the prescription of creative minority for job-hunt and career change or creative/systematic approach. According to Bolles and probably not accidentally, this is the most successful strategy for job-hunting and career change, with a 86% success rate. In a nutshell, *Parachute* advises job seekers to do what they like to do and do so by identifying what, where, and how—what are your favorite transferable skills

(skills acquired in one field and can be used in another), where do you want to use them, and how to find a job that uses your transferable skills where you want to use them. Unlike the traditional approach which offers quick fixes that may work this time, but not next time, the *Parachute* method, if done right this time, would work next time when you have to go about job-hunting again (16-17 [2008]).

Bolles provides step-by-step, do-it-yourself ways to find out what, where, and how, while giving useful information and comforting thoughts along the way. For instance, to figure out one's favorite transferable skills are or skills one likes to use, Bolles recommends a process called "self-inventory," which involves several story-writing exercises. Bolles also insists that there are always vacancies even in hard times, if for no other reasons than churning, that is, people quit their jobs for various reasons (21-23, 241 [2008]). Foremost, the conviction on the part of job seekers that there are always vacancies enables them to focus on what they want to do and seek out employers regardless of vacancies.

Overall, he emphasizes self-knowledge as central to the *Parachute* method. Unlike the traditional method that advises job seekers to look at the needs of the job market to target where they might work, the *Parachute* way starts with job seekers and what they want instead of the job market. Bolles argues that job seekers need half the information about the job market they thought they needed, but twice the information about themselves they thought they needed. Bolles admits that the *Parachute* method requires a lot of hard work and serious thinking that could take much time, but the reward is a satisfying and fulfilling career rather than just a job that puts bread on the table as is often the case under the traditional method.

3. Finding A Dream Job

Even though the above advice to do what one likes to do and the strategy to find such a job remain constant throughout *Parachute*'s different editions, there have been also changes made over the years. For instance, the topic “job-hunting while on the job” was first addressed in 1981 and developed into a detailed appendix by 1987 (McGee 113). Such change probably reflected the fact that—according to Bolles—one-third of job seekers are those already employed. In addition, the advice to avoid underemployment as well as unemployment is intended for both the employed and the unemployed.

Yet, these were all removed later, which is arguably an indication that, amid the spread of white-collar layoffs, the concern for unemployment outweighs underemployment or job searching by the employed. In the mean time, “starting your own business” appeared as a section and then later as a chapter, a sign of growing practice self-employment, while a chapter on “entering job market over 50+” was newly added, indicating that layoffs throw even those in their 50s into job-hunting (81 [2005]; 215 [2008]).

In addition, the topic “depression” was first included in the index of the 1992 edition, which, as McGee notes, was likely prompted by the recession of 1990 and the spread of the then newly-coined term “downsizing.” By the mid-1990s, it expanded into a chapter with 13 subheadings, including “unemployment as cause” as well as some common-sense coping strategies from depressed job seekers such as getting adequate sleep and exercise, eating well, and doing some mental exercises—including making a list of things that you enjoy and writing stories about your life (McGee 120). Likewise, in response to the Great Recession in the late 2000s, the “hard times edition” of 2009 newly included similar coping strategies like sleeping

well, getting unemployment insurance and food stamps, and taking a temp job (Bolles 11 [2009]).

Interestingly, there have been signs of changes concerning *Parachute's* advice of doing what you like to do, which, even while remaining constant as its central element, has become more intense and even spiritual. This can be first glimpsed in the book's stated goals and writing styles. For example, in the preface to the 1979 edition, Bolles stated that *Parachute* was an attempt to teach job seekers how to fish, not just catching a fish for them, so that they would know how to go about job-hunting no matter how many times they might have to do it. In addition, he maintained job seekers should learn how to do job-hunting in the most effective way, so that their "talents really get used" (x-xi). In 1983, besides reiterating some of the same points in the preface, Bolles laid out "12 hard times strategies" that can "improve your chances of finding a job," which he promised to further expand upon in the book (ix-xi).

By the 2000s, this practical talks and matter-of-fact writing style largely gave way to the emphasis on a dream job and/or a reckoning vision along with rhetoric befitting to this. For example, in the preface to the 2008 edition, Bolles stated that job seekers need two tools above else, "vision tools" for uncovering their "ideal work" and "practical tools for finding that vision, that work, and that mission" (xiv). As a moment to realize such a vision or an ideal work, the job search is given many names.

We call it “at last going after your dreams.”
We call it “finding more purpose and meaning for your life.”
We call it “making a career-change.”
We call it “deciding to try something new.”
We call it “setting out in a different direction in your life.”
We call it “getting out of the rat race.”
We call it “going after your dream job.”
We call it “finding your mission in life, at last” (239 [2008])

In line with this, the three keys to a truly successful job-search campaign in 1979—what, where, and how—were renamed in 2008 as “The Three Secrets to Finding That Dream Job of Yours,” as the chapter where the above passage was taken was tellingly titled (240).

In 2009, the book’s two parts, each dealing with the practical and vision tools, were titled as “Find a Job in Hard Times” and “Finding a Life . . . That Has Meaning and Purpose.” Bolles also pointed out that once one’s vision or values for life is figured out, then almost any talent or skill one has could be put into its service (3, 183, 197), indicating that uncovering one’s dream or vision takes precedence over the skills one has. Likewise, whereas Bolles always started the “flower exercise” (which is meant to help job seekers identify their skills and where one wants to use them) with identifying one’s skills, in 2009 he started it with values you want to serve (one of the six factors to consider to figure out where you want to work) (196). In addition, while admitting that the hard times following the Great Recession made job-hunting more frustrating than ever before, he still insisted on finding one’s dream job (3-4 [2014]).

Another related instance that shows both changes and continuities in *Parachute*’s various annual editions is the following passages that have recurred in the book. Incidentally, they encapsulate subtle shifts in the book’s religious references, as well.

In 1979, in a chapter titled “What Do You Want To Do?” Bolles stated that

God’s world already has more than enough people who can’t wait for five o’clock to come, so that they can go and do what they really want to do. It doesn’t need us to swell that crowd. Us or anyone else. It needs people who know what they really want to do and who do it at their place of work, as their work. (67)

By 1991, the passage under a chapter titled “What Skills Do You Most Enjoy Using?” was revised as follows.

There is a vast world of work out there in this country, where at least 118 million people are employed—many of them bored out of their minds. All day long. Not for nothing is their motto TGIF—“Thank God It’s Friday.” They live for the weekends, when they can go do what they really want to do.

There are already more than enough of such poor souls. The world does not need you or me to add ourselves to their number. What the world does need is more people who feel true enthusiasm for their work. People who have taken the time to think—that is, to think out what they uniquely can do and what they uniquely have to offer to the world. (72)

By 2008, the passage, now under the short section “Not a Selfish Activity” in a chapter, “The Three Secrets to Finding That Dream Job of Yours,” became quite lengthy.

It [going after one’s dream] is related to what the world most needs from you. That world currently is filled with workers whose weeklong question is, When is the weekend going to be here? And, then, Thank God It’s Friday! Their work puts bread on the table but they are bored out of their minds. Some of

them are bored because even though they know what they'd rather be doing, they can get out of their dead-end jobs, for one reason or another. But too many others, unfortunately, are bored simply because they have never given this sufficient priority in their life...never taken the time to think—to think out what they uniquely can do, and what they uniquely have to offer to the world. They've flopped from one job to another, letting accident, circumstance, coincidence and whim carry them wheresoever it would.

What the world most needs from you is not to add to their number, but to figure out, and then contribute to the world, what you came into this world to do.

Let's face it, dear reader, neither one of us is getting any younger. If you don't go after your dreams now, when will you? (240)

In short, work has been given more and more meaning—not just what you want to do, but what you can offer to the world and what you came into this world to do (also note the shift from a definitive reference “God’s world” to a more vernacular expression of TGIF), while the call to find such work became urgent, persuading and inspirational by 2008.

It is true that the idea of career based on doing what you like—the premise for Bolles' prescription to follow one's dream job—has been present throughout *Parachute's* annual editions as the above passages indicate. In fact, given Bolles' background in the Episcopalian ministry, the influence of the Protestant notion of calling—work one is born to do—can be felt in the emphasis on the career that utilizes job seekers' full talents (given by the God) or self-inventory of the skills they have as well as enjoy using. In this regard, the earlier editions of *Parachute* even had “a special word for Puritans” for their disapproval of seeking pleasure, appealing that “enjoyment is part of the God's plan.” In addition, Bolles has always advised against “being realistic,” arguing that for every person who overdreams there

are four who underdream and sell themselves short and this led 80% of American workers to be underemployed (85, 92 [1979]).

Despite this, in the earlier editions, the reference to one's dream job—not to mention the actual use of the term—was only occasional and addressed as part of discussions on *Parachute's* job search strategy, while its tone was largely practical. Then, throughout the 1990s, pursuing one's dream job and finding meaning in life became increasingly emphasized. By the 2000s, the reference to this had become far more frequent and taken the center stage, with one's dream job and vision emphasized over one's skills, even while much of the text—in the earlier editions, most of it—was still devoted to the flower exercise to find what and where. In short, there has been an unmistakable shift to a heightened emphasis on following one's dream job.

4. Making Sense of Changes

Then, what explains such a shift toward a growing emphasis on advice to pursue one's dream job? In advising job seekers to do what they like to do, Bolles has been well aware of the motivational benefits of such position. He saw that the traditional job-hunting method, with the very low success rate, makes it difficult to go on job-hunting with any enthusiasm. Indeed, he noted that job seekers often quit job searching within three months (24 [1993]).

Unlike this, the prospect of doing what they like is likely to motivate job seekers and make them hunt for a job “with every fibre” of their “being,” which could also help them actually land a job. As Bolles sees it, job searching requires perseverance, while passion and enthusiasm are the key to perseverance, motivating job seekers to

continue their job search despite the challenges they face (103 [1999]). Accordingly, Bolles may have increasingly emphasized going after one's dream job to motivate and inspire job seekers. Motivation in the job search process may be especially important to *Parachute*, as it relies on the self-help method to accomplish a painstaking self-inventory and research required by the *Parachute* method.

At the same time, it is equally arguable that motivational benefits of pursuing one's dream job are all the more required by the changing job market conditions. For example, frequent layoffs require a more frequent need for job-hunting, while the longer duration of unemployment means that job searching takes longer than before and, as McGee points out, it is difficult to expect real wage increase and job security (1-10). As job seekers have to go job-hunting in this context, there are indications that pursuing a dream job has been highlighted in response to job market changes.

In fact, in earlier editions, Bolles sought to motivate job seekers in terms of financial compensation, the amount of time spent at work, and job satisfaction. For example, in 1979, talking about motivation in job-hunting, Bolles urged job seekers to aim at a job that promised job satisfaction, full use of their talents—not a “fruitless occupation” where you are undervalued and underemployed—and “the stewardship of perhaps half a million dollars over the next 30 years.” It was based on that you are 40 years old and work until 70 with a starting salary at \$14,000 a year and a \$1,000 raise each year for 10 years out of 30. He also argued that 20,000 hours or more are at stake in job-hunting, as a 40 hours a week (a full-time job) would be 2,000 hours a year and 20,000 hours for 10 years (44-45, 68).

Yet, even while a section on salary negotiation later expanded into a chapter and the idea of 20,000 hours (this number often changes depending on the number of years expected to work) at stake in job-hunting continued well into the 1990s, the reference to financial motivation soon disappeared. It may be argued that this was

prompted by the consideration that nobody's job was safe anymore, as Bolles repeatedly pointed out throughout the 1990s as one of the rules about hiring and firing (12-13 [1994]). Indeed, when long-term employment is difficult to get, it seems futile to seek to motivate job seekers in terms of money they could make and/or hours they could spend at work.

The 1991 edition provides some more clues as to the possible connection between the changing job market conditions and a heightened emphasis on following one's dream job. In the 1991 edition, Bolles discussed "compensation and other rewards" as one of the "essential parts of a dream" in the chapter "Where Do You Want To Use Your Skills?" Yet, rather than addressing financial motivation as in earlier editions or required salary levels as in later editions, Bolles used the occasion mostly to uphold the wisdom of finding work one likes to do. For example, he posited that "we may not get money even if we want to." In that case, it is crucial to choose work "fascinating to you," since that is likely to be "its own reward" when you are not financially successful. In addition, if you do what "you are dying to do," your enthusiasm may make the job financially rewarding (106).

Given that laid-off workers often experience a drop in salaries when reemployed (Lane 45; Newman 1-19), while the number of people working part-time as they could not find full-time positions also increased (Luhby), achieving financial success through work does not seem to be a viable option. Accordingly, as Bolles argues, doing what one likes to do could be the only source of solace and motivation in the light of such a prospect. Bolles' later call to find work you love so much that "you can't believe you are being paid to do it—since you'd be willing to do it for nothing" (115 [2005])—further shows that the ideal of a dream job is offered to make up for poor, even zero, compensation, indicating pursuing one's dream job is emphasized in connection with job market changes.

By 1999, Bolles made one interesting addition to the advice to pursue one's dream job. In the section titled "Pursuing Your Dream" under a chapter "Where Do You Want To Do It?" Bolles at first seemed to acquiesce to the death of the concept of a dream job, noting that most people think they are lucky to have any job. Not surprisingly, he then insisted that dream jobs still exist and can be found by the *Parachute* method (159 [1999]). As can be seen in the following passages, dream jobs could be maintained over time by the job seekers' attitude, and it is job market changes—one's job may end any time—that necessitate an attitude to help turn a job into a dream job.

If you demand that your dream job be one which is permanent, allows you to 'lean on oars', in a predictable setting, with raises and promotions as your reward, then your likelihood of being happy in this world of work is not very great. Attitude is everything! Attitude has to do with the way you act, but—even more—with how you think about things. (159 [1999])

According to Bolles, there are four parts to attitude. First, if you would make a job your dream job, you must "think of every job you get as temporary," as your job may end at any time due to "the nature of today's job market." As a job is temporary, the second part of attitude is that you must "think of every job you get as a seminar" and be willing to learn. Being temporary, the job is also unpredictable. Accordingly, the third part requires you to "think of every job you get as an adventure," meeting "the unpredictablens of it all with high spirits and a sense of excitement rather than dread." Finally, as a job is temporary and your contribution at work is not very likely to be recognized and appreciated, you must "think of every job you get as one where the satisfaction must lie in the work itself," "in the very doing of it" (160-161 [1999]). In this final part, Bolles, as he did in 1991, presents

work as the sole source of satisfaction that makes up for the lack of good compensation and/or recognition, pointing to the importance of choosing one's dream job.

In short, the four parts of attitude—by the way, all are dictated by the fact that a job is temporary—could help make a job your dream job. Yet, emphasizing attitude ironically seems to indicate the difficulty of achieving a dream job. Were it easy to find and maintain a dream job, one would not have to resort to one's attitude to turn a job into a dream job. In fact, while pursuing one's dream job has been increasingly advised, factors such as economic downturn and job market changes can make it difficult to land a job, not to mention a dream job. By 2005, Bolles, while still urging job seekers to go after a dream job that gives “self-esteem in the very doing of it,” also admitted the possibility that they may not find it exactly. Then, attitude was offered to resolve this predicament. Attitude, with its “power to transform just any job into dream job,” was “the key to finding a dream job” (127, 129 [2005]).

At the same time, the “attitude” required to turn a job into a dream job is really a call to accept job market changes. In other words, pursuing one's dream job is ultimately predicated on accepting job market changes, above all, insecure employment. By 2008, Bolles renamed the four parts of attitude as “a philosophy of work.” To the four, he newly added attitude, i.e., “You need to approach any job with the philosophy that it can be transformed” and “[y]our power lies in your conviction that you can, you may, you must transform that job by the attitude you bring with you.” Bolles also advised the adoption of the philosophy of work “ahead of time” as “the most useful thing to do” (33 [2008]). Overall, newly focusing on attitude, or the philosophy of work, and urging job seekers to embrace it reveal how job market changes, especially the reality of precarious employment, affect the pursuit of a dream job.

If a dream job can be found and maintained by one's attitude, it is not surprising that Bolles' emphasis on finding a dream job was not dampened by the hard times of the Great Recession of the late 2000s. As jobs are difficult to come by, Bolles did ask whether this was a good time to go after one's dream job. Yet, even while he admitted the greater difficulties of job-hunting since 2008, not only was his answer positive, but hard times gave him an additional impetus to pursue one's dream. In view of the economic conditions of the time, he reasoned, getting a poor job could take just as much time as finding a good one (16 [2011]).

Likewise, the fact that people have to engage in job-hunting several times—an exigency often wrought by the spread of layoffs—can be turned into an advantage for the pursuit of a dream job. According to Bolles, a dream job could be found in stages. As such, as one of the “Seven Rules for Choosing or Changing Careers,” he points out that people do not have to get their dream job the first time (167 [2008]). Rather, having three to five careers in one's lifetime means that, even if job seekers do not find their dream job this time, each job-hunt and career change could be turned into a step towards it.

Similarly turning unfortunate events into something positive, Bolles also argues that unemployment is not just a time of distress, although it is often felt as “a major calamity” in life. Rather, it could be used as “a kind of time out”—an opportunity or interruption “to pause, catch their breath and rethink what they want to do with the rest of their life” (15 [2011]). As difficult economic times are turned into a chance to pursue a dream job in this way, there has been more emphasis on pursuing a dream job even when economic conditions seem to point otherwise.

5. Conclusion

As *Parachute* has undergone revision each year, this paper set out to examine how it has registered the upheavals in white-collar job market changes by focusing on its central career advice of finding a dream job that gives satisfaction and meaning to job seekers. It is true that Bolles' advice to pursue what one enjoys doing or one's dream job has been present from *Parachute's* early editions, motivating job seekers in the difficult task of finding a job.

At the same time, this paper tried to show there has been an unmistakable shift toward a heightened emphasis on finding one's dream. In particular, *Parachute's* advice to pursue one's dream job has been increasingly highlighted as the sole source of satisfaction and reward, making up for the growing absence of other incentives such as secure employments, raises, and the recognition of one's contributions. Accordingly, the paper tries to show how the endearing ideal of pursuing one's dream job not only is increasingly emphasized in response to recent job market changes, but also serves these changes by offering comfort and compensation for disheartening labor market developments. It examined this as an instance to show career self-help advice and its central career guide of pursuing one's dream job reflects job market changes in the U.S. and offers convenient explanation/excuse for them.

However, if pursuing one's dream job has been emphasized alongside labor market changes, it seems that job market reality makes it difficult to achieve the ideal of a dream job. Foremost, getting a job, not to mention a dream job, is often problematic. The ideal of getting a dream job is probably endearing to many, but it may remain just as an ideal. Besides, how long could a vision of a dream job motivate and inspire job seekers, if they can expect only unstable employment and poor

compensation each time they have to look for a new job?

In fact, Bolles' constant advice against being realistic may be an indication that labor market reality hinders pursuing one's dream job. In addition, as discussed, newly focusing on a job seekers' attitude as a way to turn any job into a dream job may be a further indication of the difficulties of achieving one's dream job in the current conditions. It may be in recognition of this difficult labor market reality that Bolles has come to emphasize having alternatives as "the key word in a successful job hunt" (17 [2006]).

In short, the lofty ideal of pursuing one's dream job cannot be sustained without enabling structural conditions. Given this, rather than being offered as a compensation and substitute for disheartening labor market developments, the ideal of a dream job could become the occasion to point to these limiting developments in the labor market and demand enabling conditions to turn that ideal into a real possibility.

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국문초록

미국 화이트칼라 노동시장의 변화와 커리어 셀프 헬프 조언

주 정 숙 (중원대)

본 논문은 미국 화이트칼라 노동시장의 변화와 관련하여 커리어 셀프 헬프 조언을 고찰하고자 한다. 지난 몇 십 년간 미국 화이트칼라 해고와 불안정한 고용이 빈번해지면서 커리어 및 구직 전략에 관해 조언하는 커리어 셀프 헬프 산업이 화이트칼라 구직자들과 노동자들에게 커다란 영향력을 행사하고 있다.

이에 본 논문은 베스트셀러 커리어 셀프 헬프 조언서인 리처드 볼스(Richard Bolles)의 『파라슈트 취업의 비밀』(*What Color Is Your Parachute? A Practical Manual for Job-Hunters and Career-Changers*)을 중심으로 미국에서 일과 커리어에 관한 일반적인 인식에 영향을 미치는 대표적인 커리어 셀프 헬프 담론으로써 자신이 원하는 일, 즉, 꿈을 추구하라는 조언을 고찰한다. 특히 볼스의 저서가 1975년부터 현재까지 매년 개정되는 점을 고려하여 구직자들이 원하는 일, 꿈을 추구하라는 책의 핵심 커리어 조언이 화이트칼라 노동시장의 변화와 함께 어떻게 변하였는지를 살펴본다. 본 논문은 꿈을 추구하라는 책의 조언이 점차 더 강조되었으며 이러한 변화가 불안정한 고용으로 대변되는 화이트칼라 노동시장의 변화를 반영하고 이에 부합함을 보여준다.

주제어: 『파라슈트 취업의 비밀』, 취업, 커리어 셀프 헬프 조언, 화이트칼라, 꿈의 직업(dream job)

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