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Fruits of the Fig-Tree. A Counsellor's Role in Assisting Gifted and Talented Adolescents to Address Their
Multipotentiality.

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Candidate's Statement

The Project submitted is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this Project or any part of the same has not been submitted for other papers or degrees for which credit or qualifications have been granted.

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ABSTRACT

Multipotentiality in gifted and talented adolescents refers to the idea that these individuals have numerous and diverse abilities and interests that can have an impact on career choice. To help these children achieve their potential a broad understanding of the issue of multipotentiality is crucial, as is emotional support and advocacy from counsellors – with school guidance counsellors ideally placed to assist. This article provides information and ideas from academic literature and research to facilitate understanding of the broader concepts and introduce suggested interventions for use with multipotentialed gifted and talented individuals. The principal findings from the review of literature suggest differentiation of counselling, a holistic, values-based and lifespan approach to career planning, mentoring, experiential learning and early intervention, coupled with long-term planning and broad academic study are useful. It has also become clear that much more research is required, particularly from the New Zealand viewpoint.

Keywords: Gifted and Talented; Multipotentiality; Interventions; Advocacy; New Zealand.

INTRODUCTION

Career choice in and of itself is difficult. It can become more difficult for the gifted and talented, affected by a trait known as multipotentiality. This article presents the reader with an overview of multipotentiality and how it can affect the gifted and talented. Initially a broad definition of giftedness and talent is developed, along with a definition of multipotentiality. The article then addresses the factors that can make multipotentiality an issue for gifted and talented adolescents, how it can negatively affect them, what behaviours and characteristics may be obvious, and which counselling interventions may be useful. Finally, the article examines what areas of further research are recommended and provides a suggested model for further research in a New Zealand context.

The information in this article is a literature review intended to introduce the reader to the issue of multipotentiality as it relates to gifted and talented adolescents. An exploration of this area and the associated literature was previously published in the *Journal of Counseling and Development* in 1999 and this review builds on that foundation (Rysiew, Shore, & Leeb, 1999).

Originally this review intended that the literature selected be published after 1999. Due to a paucity of relevant theory and research, it became apparent that this timeframe would need to be extended. This extension was appropriate to incorporate older but still relevant

information and serves to further highlight the ongoing need for research in this area.

Of the articles included, each author's credibility was confirmed by reviewing citations of their work within the academic community and reviewing their credentials, largely via the academic search engines of Google Scholar and EBSCO Discover Publishing. Where possible, New Zealand sources have taken precedence over international literature.

DEFINING THE TERMINOLOGY

As counsellors, we are exposed daily to sets of terminology. They can be from clients, colleagues, agencies, or even the modalities in which we work. Understanding the terminology can be one of the first steps in gaining an appreciation of the presenting issues and the culture of the people with whom we work. In this instance, we need to find a workable definition of both gifted and talented *and* of multipotentiality. However, we also need to be aware that there is no simple definition for either term (R. Moltzen, 2011).

Being "gifted and talented" is a phrase used to describe someone who does, or has the potential to, excel in a particular area or areas of life (J. Gallagher, 2008). These areas of giftedness are varied and inclusive (R. Moltzen, 2011). They may incorporate academic, technical, or mechanical excellence; creative, intuitive or productive thinking; the fine arts; general intelligence; psychomotor or sporting prowess; advanced

leadership and social skills; being culturally, spiritually or even empathetically extraordinary (R. Moltzen, 2011; Piechowski, 2003).

Riley, Bevan-Brown, Bicknell, Carroll-Lind and Kearney (2004) when reporting on the academic needs of gifted and talented children to the Ministry of Education made it clear that reported definitions within our schools may be “broad and multi-categorical” (p. 12) but that giftedness in cultural, spiritual, and emotional areas remains under supported. They also noted concern that these definitions often exclude Māori perspectives and values (Ministry of Education, 2004).

R. Moltzen (2011) argues that a major issue that surrounds settling on a definition is the idea that giftedness is a socio-cultural construct and fluid in its nature: therein lies a strength through dynamic change and inclusiveness. Peterson (2006) asserts that any definition for the gifted and talented must encompass any and all talents, while at the same time incorporating culture.

There is no comprehensive, accepted definition; however, we need a starting point. Canadian gifted and talented researcher and advocate Dr Meredith Greene (2006) succinctly and sufficiently explains, “gifted individuals are capable of or demonstrate superior performance” (p. 1) and “this can be demonstrated by a variety of behaviours and in many different domains” (p. 2). Finally, where giftedness is evident, we see an individual for whom their “development and experience . . . is unique

and significantly different from their age-peers” (Elijah & Crawfordsville, 2009, p. 2).

In essence, multipotentiality is the ability of a gifted and talented individual to maintain interests and talents across a number of differing fields (Colangelo, 2003). Multipotentiality is the “ability to select and develop any number of career options because of a wide variety of interests, aptitudes, and abilities” (Kerr, 1990, p.1).

Multipotentiality in and of itself does not always present as an issue and in some cases, particularly in the modern work place, may be an asset (Elijah & Crawfordsville, 2009; Kim, 2013; Sajjadi, Rejsking, & Shore, 2001). Where it can cause problems for gifted and talented individuals is when it adversely affects career choice and, as a result, the individual’s emotional well-being and sense of self (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2006; Kerr, 1990; Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994; Peterson, 2001).

Kerr (1990) outlines evidence of multipotentiality in children as being seen in over-commitment, lack of completion of projects and goals, a lack of clear preferences in interests, or the inability to allow oneself time to “just be”. However, these issues may not be obvious, as the gifted and talented individual will still tend to achieve at a very high level (Kerr, 1990).

In essence, for the gifted and talented individuals with multipotentiality “the problem is how to make a decision,

how to choose a path from so many realistic possibilities?”

(Colangelo, 2003, p. 377). For the counsellor, we must ask

how to support this individual so that their multipotentiality is

a positive trait, not a negative one.

WHY IS MULTIPOTENTIALITY AN ISSUE?

I saw my life branching out before me like the green fig tree in the story. From the tip of every branch, like a fat purple fig, a wonderful future beckoned and winked. One fig was a husband and a happy home and children, and another fig was a famous poet and another fig was a brilliant professor, and another fig was Ee Gee, the amazing editor, and another fig was Europe and Africa and South America, and another fig was Constantin [sic] and Socrates and Attila and a pack of other lovers with queer names and offbeat professions, and another fig was an Olympic lady crew champion, and beyond and above these figs were many more figs I couldn't quite make out. I saw myself sitting in the crotch of this fig tree, starving to death, just because I couldn't make up my mind which of the figs I would choose. I wanted each and every one of them, but choosing one meant losing all the rest, and, as I sat there, unable to decide, the figs began to wrinkle and go black, and, one by one, they plopped to the ground at my feet. (Plath, 1966, p. 80)

Few would argue with the idea that Nobel Prize winner (posthumous)

Sylvia Plath was an extremely gifted and talented writer. In the above

excerpt from *The Bell Jar* she succeeds in drawing a vivid picture of the

reality of multipotentiality having a negative effect on her life.

Negative multipotentiality in gifted and talented adolescents has been associated with anxiety, depression, overwhelm, and existential dilemmas (Greene, 2002, 2006; Maxwell, 2007; Peterson, 2001, 2006; Silverman, 1993). These feelings and disorders are largely attributed to needing to make choices when faced with the realisation that “it is not possible to do all that they want to do or are capable of doing” (Reis & Herbert, 2008, p. 279).

Having numerous career options may seem attractive, but the reality remains that more choices tend to increase the complexity of decision-making (Kerr, 1990; Greene, 2006). For those with multipotentiality “vocational choice is often perceived as the giving up of options that one cherishes” (Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994, p. 298). Students may find it difficult and painful to narrow career choices down and they may seem on a quest to find an ideal career or something that fits with them perfectly (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2006; Silverman, 1993).

A common attribute associated with gifted and talented individuals is perfectionism, and multipotentiality can exacerbate this (Colangelo, 2003; Peterson, 2001). There is a very real fear of failure, or of making a choice that forecloses other options (Kerr, 1990; Greene, 2002; Greene, 2006; Silverman, 1993). Even if all options are somehow attempted and incorporated there may be a concern that the cost of this lies in becoming second rate at everything and mastering nothing (Silverman, 1993).

Gifted and talented adolescents make these choices under a surfeit of expectations from parents, teachers, and society at large. This pressure can overwhelm their own preferences (Colangelo, 2003; Kerr, 1990; Leung, Conoley & Scheel, 1994; Peterson, 2001; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008). As multipotentiality can make the narrowing down of choices difficult, these adolescents may let expectations and coercion make the choice for them, exacerbating their sense of existential limitation (Colangelo, 2003; Jung, 2012, Peterson, 2001; Webb, 1999). Another issue can be stress associated with making career choices based on others' expectations to achieve perceived financial success and prestige (Colangelo, 2003; Jung, 2012). There is also a sense of shame associated with the inability to decide (Silverman, 1993).

As these children experience more of the world, they are exposed to opportunities previously not considered. As such their interests and abilities may broaden even more (Kerr & Soldano, 2003; Kim, 2013). As a result of their multipotentiality, an adolescent who had decided upon a course of action may then change their mind, leading to significant financial and emotional costs (Colangelo, 2003, Greene, 2006; Kim, 2013). The costs to the individual can include a sense of prolonging adolescence and parental reliance as the individual continues to be financially supported while they train (Colangelo, 2003; Shultz & Delisle, 2003). Individuals attending university may change majors a number of times or may drop out altogether (Elijah & Crawfordsville, 2009; Kerr,

1990; Peterson, 2001). Other gifted individuals may find themselves using hyperachievement to mask their internal issues thereby increasing their stress as they attempt to live up to others' expectations (Peterson, 2006). This behaviour links back to Kerr's (1990) assertion that early evidence of multipotentiality can be seen in over commitment.

In the long-term, multipotentialed individuals may have multiple short-term jobs, unemployment, and *underemployment* as they seek to quiet a sense of not quite fitting in anywhere (Kerr, 1990). They may fall behind their age-peers in career progression and life stages as a result (Colangelo, 2003; Kerr 1990; Shultz & Delisle, 2003).

Multipotentiality in and of itself does not need to become a problem. With awareness and care it can be effectively managed to the point where it appears to have little negative impact on lives (Sajjadi, Rejsking, & Shore, 2001). "Giftedness is a condition causing individuals . . . to question their being" (Shultz & Delisle, 2003, p. 490). Multipotentiality is simply a facet of this.

DIFFERENTIATION

Renzulli (2011) and Milgram (1991) make a case for supporting our gifted and talented children's social and emotional development. They argue that we as a society have a duty to allow these individuals every opportunity to achieve fulfilment, with the pay-off being the contributions they make to society (Milgram, 1991; Renzulli, 2011).

Renzulli (2011) believes that with the right support these individuals become society's problem-solvers and the short-term costs associated with supporting them are more than repaid in the long term. A way for counsellors to support our gifted and talented children is to understand that they are different from other children. And not simply that they are different, but that their needs in the counselling space differ drastically from those of their age-peers (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005; Colangelo, 2003; Elijah & Crawfordsville, 2009; G. Gallagher, 2011; Greene, 2002; Kerr, 1990; Leung, Conoley & Scheel, 1994; Maxwell, 2007; Milgram, 1991; Moon, Kelly, & Feldhusen, 1997; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Shultz & Delisle, 2003; Silverman, 1993; Yoo & Moon, 2006).

One of the most effective things a counsellor can offer a gifted and talented individual is to understand that their needs are different and as such provide them with differentiated counselling (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005; Colangelo, 2003; Elijah & Crawfordsville, 2009; G. Gallagher, 2011; Greene, 2002; Kerr, 1990; Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994; Maxwell, 2007; Milgram, 1991; Moon, Kelly, & Feldhusen, 1997; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Shultz & Delisle, 2003; Silverman, 1993; Yoo & Moon, 2006). For a counsellor to work effectively they need to understand that "the needs of gifted individuals differ from those of more typical individuals" (Kerr, 1990, p .2). Or to put it more simply, just as we provide differentiated support to individuals at the

lower end of the abilities spectrum we must be aware of the need to do so for those with upper end abilities (Peterson, 2006).

There is also a strong opinion that counsellors should receive specific training to understand the traits, issues, and needs of the gifted and talented (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005; Colangelo, 2003; Elijah, 2009; G. Gallagher, 2011; Greene, 2002; Kerr, 1990; Milgram, 1991; Moon, Kelly, & Feldhusen, 1997; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Yoo & Moon, 2006). Yoo and Moon (2006) summarise some of these personality characteristics as including “perfectionism, excitability, sensitivity, intensity, a desire for recognition . . . , nonconformity, questioning of rules or authority, a strong sense of justice and idealism” (p. 53). These particular traits may further exacerbate issues arising from multipotentiality or, indeed, may contribute to multipotentiality having a negative rather than positive impact on decision making. An awareness and understanding of the complexity of gifted and talented individuals will allow for more productive counselling to occur (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005; Colangelo, 2003; Elijah & Crawfordville, 2009; G. Gallagher, 2011; Greene, 2002; Kerr, 1990; Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994; Maxwell, 2007; Milgram, 1991; Moon, Kelly, & Feldhusen, 1997; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Shultz & Delisle, 2003; Silverman, 1993; Yoo & Moon, 2006).

Greene (2002) cited Sytsma and the National Research Centre for Gifted and Talented as finding that only 13% of American guidance

counsellors polled offered counselling with a gifted and talented focus. Greene (2002) and Milgram (1991) also mentioned concern that the reality for time-poor guidance counsellors may preclude them gaining the training they need to provide best practice to the gifted and talented.

Yoo and Moon (2006) instigated an empirical investigation into the concerns and needs of parents of gifted and talented children using a private counselling service. They found that where differentiated services existed they would be used in preference to schools or agencies that did not differentiate. This study further highlighted that counsellors wanting to provide best practice to gifted and talented students are recommended to undertake specific training in this area, particularly those who work in schools (Elijah & Crawfordville, 2009; Greene, 2002; Jung, 2012; Milgram, 1991; Yoo & Moon, 2006). Finally, of further interest from the Yoo and Moon (2006) research is that the parents involved in the study indicated a “high need” for career planning and an understanding of developmental stages as they relate to the gifted (Yoo & Moon, 2006, p. 57).

In summary, the literature strongly suggests that counsellors need to offer differentiated counselling services to the gifted and talented and be well trained to do so (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005; Colangelo, 2003; Elijah & Crawfordville, 2009; Greene, 2002; Kerr, 1990; Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994; Maxwell, 2007; Milgram, 1991; Moon, Kelly, &

Feldhusen, 1997; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Shultz & Delisle, 2003; Silverman, 1993; Yoo & Moon, 2006). Although differentiation is a broad concept it forms one of the findings of the review into how to best support gifted and talented adolescents. At the least differentiation will encourage counsellors to be aware of the potential issues and behaviours indicated in the previous section that may be exacerbated by multipotentiality.

ASSUMPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

In order to offer a differentiated service to the gifted and talented it is also useful to understand the assumptions and expectations that surround these individuals. The usefulness lies in counsellors being aware of some of the prejudice and pressures associated with being gifted and talented, and the resulting expectations. In reviewing the literature it is common to find researchers writing about these false assumptions and expectations in order to raise the awareness of the reader. In all cases the researchers cited below have included these statements to highlight common false assumptions and they find little or no evidence that they are correct. These statements are referenced purely to show where they were sourced from and it cannot be stated more emphatically that in all cases the writers have included these points to show that they are incorrect.

The literature notes a common assumption that career planning takes care of itself (Kerr, 1990): that the gifted and talented are

emotionally “healthy, self directed and basically self-sufficient” and so have little need for counselling services (Peterson, 2006, p. 43). Gifted and talented adolescents should be “smart enough to figure it out themselves”, the “it” of course being career choice (Peterson, 2006, p. 44). Gifted and talented children are well adjusted and have no need for special services (Colangelo, 2003). The gifted and talented can be either maladjusted or superior (N. Moltzen, 2011). The gifted and talented can take care of themselves and do not seem at risk or need direction (Kerr & Ghrist-Priebe, 1988; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Silverman, 1993).

Like most assumptions, these are deemed to be misguided and show a lack of understanding of what it is to be gifted and talented as well as how multipotentiality can have an effect on choices (Colangelo, 2003; Kerr, 1990; N. Moltzen, 2011; Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Silverman, 1993).

Assumptions and stereotypes based on high ability also lead to expectations for the gifted and talented. In particular, there is huge pressure to achieve from their families, communities, and from society in general (Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994; Peterson, 2006). Large expectations are placed on them around “not wasting their gift” or, as Colangelo translates it, “making a decision that is reasonable to an adult” (2003, p. 376).

The weight of these expectations and assumptions feed into issues that gifted and talented adolescents may be having with multipotentiality (Peterson, 2001).

ADVOCACY

One way that counsellors can help gifted and talented children who are experiencing issues with multipotentiality is by acting as an advocate (Greene, 2002, 2006; Kerr, 1990; Kim, 2013; Milgram, 1991; Peterson, 2006; Silverman, 1993).

Counsellors who have an appreciation of the issues may be able to advocate in schools to shift educational focuses for these children from subject specialisation based on test scores to celebrating and encouraging their broad curiosity (Greene, 2002). Greene suggests that the school system tends towards preparing students for university or employment and as such encourages specialising in areas of academic strength. She argues that for students with multipotentiality it would be more useful to encourage them to retain their broad interests and follow their passions but that schools may need the education to appreciate this (Greene, 2002).

Counsellors may also work in the school system to collaborate with others to create opportunities for children (Greene, 2002). Counsellors as advocates can be useful in clarifying and challenging the assumptions and expectations noted in the previous section (Milgram, 1991;

Silverman, 1991). This advocacy may occur in schools, communities, and even with parents (Milgram, 1991; Silverman, 1991).

Counsellors can also work as advocates with parents to help them understand perceived fall-out from multipotentiality (Greene, 2006; Kerr, 1990; Kim, 2013; Milgram, 1991; Peterson, 2006; Silverman, 1993). This can include clarifying the effect of expectations, in particular parental pressures to make career choices based on financial gains rather than the individual's values (Milgram, 1991; Silverman, 1991). Counsellors can also educate parents to ease concerns over costs, lack of direction, and changes in existing or proposed career or university plans (Greene, 2006, Silverman, 1993).

INTERVENTIONS

Little definitive advice is available for counsellors on how best to support the gifted and talented struggling with multipotentiality. There are, however, some suggested strategies that can be explored that relate well to common counselling practice. It is recommended that counsellors be proactive about supporting gifted and talented children in general, and those with multipotentiality in particular (Colangelo, 2003; Peterson, 2006; Silverman, 1993).

Knowledge of Self and Development

Educating the client in what it is to be gifted and talented and multipotentialed creates a sense of giving them the words to

understand themselves (Colangelo, 2003; Kim, 2013; Milgram, 1991; Moon, Kelly & Feldhusen, 1997; Peterson, 2006).

Counselling the individual from a developmental focus allows them to prepare for changes and stages and can strengthen them to face the challenges they are likely to face (Colangelo, 2003; Kerr, 1990; Peterson, 2006; Silverman, 1993).

The literature suggests it is important that the individual understands career exploration as a lifestyle and to see career change as acceptable and normal (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2006; Peterson, 2006; Silverman, 1993). This information should be communicated as early as possible to normalise the experience, and support should be long term and aspirational (Kerr, 1990; Kim, 2013; Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994; Silverman, 1993).

Counsellors are also advised to facilitate group work, providing added strength in numbers with peers who appreciate and can relate to the individual's experiences, thereby reducing any sense of isolation (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2002; Kim, 2013; Peterson, 2006).

From here the individual can be encouraged towards self-directed but supported learning regarding career options (Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994). Exposure to biographical works of individuals with inspiring careers or who forged their own paths has also been suggested (Kerr, 1990; Silverman, 1993).

Modalities

Where the literature mentions a specific modality for use with issues arising from multipotentiality there seem to be two researched positions. One advocates Rogerian methods, also known as person-centred counselling (Kerr & Soldano, 2003; Peterson & Moon, 2008; Silverman, 1993). The other modality mentioned in the literature as being effective focuses on strength based, social constructivism – effectively White’s narrative method (Greene, 2002, Maree, Bester, Lubbe, & Beck, 2001; Maxwell, 2007; Peterson, 2006; White, 2011).

Person-centred counselling techniques underpin most modern counselling (McLeod, 2011). Rogers’ principles of empathy, congruence, and positive self-regard appear in nearly any given counselling activity (McLeod, 2011). Peterson and Moon’s (2008) review of counselling the gifted and talented found that all of the suggested counselling interventions examined had their foundation in, or incorporated aspects of, person-centred counselling. Person-centred techniques are also specifically identified in the literature reviewed here as an effective modality for use in working with multipotentiality (Kerr & Soldano, 2003; Silverman, 1993).

The assumption that underpins person-centred counselling is that all individuals strive to achieve self-actualisation, that is to be all that they can be (Rogers, 1959). Rogers maintains that we all have the ability to reach this state using our own resources. The individual with

multipotentiality is seeking to be all that they can and struggling with a multitude of ways to be and life-paths to explore (Kerr, 1990; Greene, 2002, 2006; Silverman, 1993). By working from a person-centred counselling stance, therapists and clients are intrinsically working to achieve self-actualisation (Rogers, 1959).

Person-centred counselling is based on the belief that the client is able to find their own answers. This ideal seems to fit perfectly with helping gifted and talented individuals make multipotentiality work for them rather than against them (Kerr & Soldano, 2003; Silverman, 1993). The literature encourages counsellors to be curious but not ignorant in order to broaden the therapeutic alliance, and to use open ended questioning to allow the client to make their own connections (Kerr & Soldano, 2003).

The second counselling modality advocated in the literature for the gifted and talented with multipotentiality is social constructivism and, based on the techniques mentioned for use, essentially narrative therapy (Greene, 2002, Maree, Bester, Lubbe & Beck, 2001; Maxwell, 2007; Peterson, 2006). Narrative therapy is a modern theory that sees its roots in philosophy and human social constructions as opposed to having grown from psychology, psychoanalysis, behaviouralism, or existentialism (White, 2011). Narrative therapy works to externalise problems, deconstructs unhelpful life-stories, and challenges negative social constructions (Nicols, 2011). The work is labelled as strength

based, in part due to the therapists' unshakable confidence in the clients (Nicols, 2011). Narrative interventions occur largely via the narrative construct itself: curious questioning to uncover unique exceptions, and in recruiting support within the wider community (Nicols, 2011).

Working from a strength based, social-constructivist stance can be useful as it intrinsically empowers the client to find their own solutions (Maxwell, 2007). Strength-based work gives the individual a sense of hope through resilience and affirms their decisions and sense of self (Peterson, 2006). When mentioned in the literature social-constructivism seems to appear in its guise of narrative therapy. This is evidenced in the use of externalisation and story as a tool and the role of the counsellor as an advocate for the client (Greene, 2002, Maree, Bester, Lubbe, & Beck, 2001; Maxwell, 2007; Peterson, 2006). The narrative becomes the life plan, seeing the person as an individual, as opposed to a career plan for a future employee (Maxwell, 2007). This construct provides room for an understanding that a decision is not the goal but that empowerment and fulfilment are (Maxwell, 2007).

At its heart the narrative modality externalises and names issues as they arise while challenging societal assumptions (White, 2011). The previous interventions suggested advocacy, naming and understanding what it is to be gifted and talented and also multipotentiality and its effects (Colangelo, 2003; Kim, 2013; Milgram, 1991; Moon, Kelly &

Feldhusen, 1997; Peterson, 2006). This appears to be narrative work and would seem an ideal way of facilitating acceptance and integration.

However, it is useful to note that from a broader counselling perspective a body of research suggests there is little evidence to support the idea that different modalities are more effective than others (Cooper, 2008). Peterson and Moon (2008) recommend more research to ascertain the best modality for use with the gifted and talented. Counselling theorists Cooper and McLeod (2010) suggest that the best modality will be the one that best suits the individual at the time.

Values Based and Holistic Career Counselling

It seems clear that one of the common interventions for multipotentiality is that counsellors should work from a values-based, whole person, collaborative stance (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2002; Greene, 2006; Kerr, 1990; Kerr & Soldano, 2003; Peterson, 2001, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008). The work should be individualised and multidimensional; “career counselling should be life counselling” (Greene, 2002, p. 2). With a deeper understanding of their values the client becomes able to look at what in life gives them meaning and how these values shape them as a person (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2002; Greene, 2006; Kerr, 1990; Kerr & Soldano, 2003; Peterson, 2001, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008). From this stance more effective and fulfilling career choices may be apparent.

When life themes are seen as key to understanding what future directions may be fulfilling, the focus is moved from choosing a career to determining what careers might satisfy the individual (Peterson, 2001; Silverman, 1993). Counselling should take a holistic, whole person focus to assist in highlighting what is important to the individual in the long term (Colangelo, 2003). Focusing on leisure activities may serve as a means to facilitate conversations around what the individual finds fulfilling (Colangelo, 2003; Kerr, 1990). By discussing the individual's life it is hoped that values that are intrinsically important to the individual become apparent; from here it may become clearer what careers may be more appropriate for them (Colangelo, 2003; Kerr, 1990; Silverman, 1993). Peterson's (2001) case studies of four gifted and talented individuals ends with one of the participants mentioning the satisfaction in "finding his bliss" (p. 35) through a career choice that honestly reflected who he was in his world at that point in time.

In short, by working collaboratively with the client to look at what in life gives them meaning, more effective career choices may be apparent. Counsellors will have a number of tools available to facilitate this.

Curriculum Planning, Mentoring, and Experiential Learning

Counsellors may also help plan an individual's curriculum, both at high school and also at university for those undertaking higher education (Kerr, 1990). Counsellors should be aware that not all gifted and talented children will, or need, to attend university to reach their

goals (Greene, 2002; Leung, Conoley, & Scheel, 1994). Higher education should be seen as a means to an end by the counsellor as well as the client an appreciation is needed that choices made in high school may change (Greene, 2006).

Broad, non-specific subject choices are recommended as a way for the gifted and talented child with multipotentiality to be open to changing opportunities (Greene, 2006; Kerr, 1990; R. Moltzen, 2011; Silverman, 1993). Where university attendance is likely the literature suggests that they undertake broad under-graduate courses and that post-graduate study is a more appropriate time for specialisation (Greene, 2006; Kerr, 1990; R. Moltzen, 2011; Silverman, 1993).

American gifted and talented, and self-described “multipotentialite” lecturer and blogger Emilie Wapnick also believes that counsellors should be very aware that,

the goal of the adviser might not be to help the student ultimately choose (even if they jump around a bit before choosing). There are happy and successful multipotentialites [sic] out there who never choose, who change careers every few years or have multiple careers at once and make it work very nicely. (Personal communication, 14 October 2013)

The key concept seems to be not to focus too early or the individual risks foreclosing many other opportunities (R. Moltzen, 2011). Broad options allow for change and, as Wapnick asserts above, some multipotentialed individuals can thrive when there are no limits placed on their choices.

Counsellors, particularly in schools, can be well-placed to facilitate mentoring and opportunities for experiential learning. Mentoring allows the individual opportunities to try things out, bounce ideas around safely and get a more realistic picture of what is involved in areas of interest (Clasen & Clasen, 2003; Gray, 2001; Grassinger, Kerr, 1990; Kim, 2013; Milgram, 1991; Peterson, 2006; Porath & Ziegler, 2010, Silverman, 1993). Mentoring links in well with a holistic view as it aims to develop and extend the gifted and talented individual's potential (Grey, 2012). Reis and Hebert (2008) note that multipotential boys in particular engage with mentors as a source of emotional support.

Milgram (1991) describes experiential learning as an effective way to test out a reality. Experiential learning can inspire fresh, new, and unthought-of ideas and opportunities and allow the individual the experience and space to change their mind or cement tentative plans (Kerr, 1990; Kim, 2013; Silverman, 1993). It may also allow gifted and talented individuals with multipotentiality gain a sense of what parts of a career they do or do not want to do and create a career path that others had not envisioned (Silverman, 1993).

Broad curriculums and opportunities for real experiences with appropriate people are suggested as a very effective way to support adolescents with multipotentiality explore varied and different possibilities.

CURRENT PRACTICE IN NEW ZEALAND

Reviewing the available literature relating to counselling the gifted and talented in general, and multipotentiality in particular, highlights a notable absence of New Zealand voices. The available research tends to have an educational basis and although useful may not provide working therapists with much guidance (R. Moltzen, 2011). Very little has been published from a New Zealand counselling perspective regarding gifted and talented communities – let alone multipotentiality.

What has been published has maintained a broad focus on counselling the gifted and talented (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005, G. Gallagher, 2011; Hermansson, 2006). J. Blakett (2005, 2006), Hermansson (2005, 2006) and G. Gallagher's (2011) published work make a useful starting point for New Zealand counsellors working with or interested in gifted and talented children. However, information on multipotentiality tends to either originate from overseas or simply mentions it as an issue among others (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005; R. Blakett, 2011). Certainly the bulk of the information in this review has come out of America or Canada and all of the empirical research presented was completed well off-shore.

The reality for New Zealand counsellors seems to be that there is little research and few training opportunities specifically for counsellors interested in working with the gifted and talented. We can be informed and guided by international research but will need to adjust it to work in

a New Zealand environment. Working with the gifted and talented is an area for research and development and of potential growth for us as a profession, with particular relevance for counsellors working in schools (Jung, 2012).

PROPOSED NEW ZEALAND MODEL FOR RESEARCH

In preparing this review the lack of New Zealand research or interventions raised questions about how best New Zealand counsellors can work with the gifted and talented and with multipotentiality. We have available to us New Zealand counselling methods, and tools and techniques that lend themselves to being adaptable to our culture. This section proposes a model of interventions for future research, building on recently published New Zealand work.

New Zealand counsellor Gay Gallagher (2011) outlined the efficacy of person-centred sandtray therapy in working with gifted and talented children. Her article serves as an introduction to the gifted and talented and shares her own and fellow counsellor Lyall Christie's reflections on the relevance of sandtray work with these children.

G. Gallagher, Lyall Christie (G. Gallagher, 2011) and fellow Auckland-based counsellor, Jackie Calder (personal communication, 14 October 2013), advocate the use of sandtray work as an effective means to engage with a client's inner self. Calder uses the sandtray from a Jungian perspective and believes that "sandplay is a powerful and gentle way to

help the client to connect with their inner world” (personal communication, 14 October 2013). Developer of the method Dora Kalff (1991) asserted that the joy of the sandtray is in allowing a client to create a world that reflects their own internal processes, thereby furthering understanding of themselves.

With gifted and talented adolescents, the sandtray therapy could be directional or non-directional and may be an effective way for counsellors to clarify choices and highlight options (Campbell, 2004).

Working to understand an individual’s values and life themes were previously introduced as a useful intervention to address multipotentiality in the gifted and talented (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2002; Greene, 2006; Kerr, 1990; Kerr & Soldano, 2003; Peterson, 2001, 2006; Peterson & Moon, 2008). Based on the opinions of G. Gallagher (2011), Christie and Calder (personal communication) sandtray work may be an ideal way to facilitate this. Sandtray is known to work effectively with adolescents both individually and in groups (Bruneu & Protivnak, 2012; Draper, Ritter, & Willingham, 2003) and there is also research to support the use of sandtray in career choice generally (Sangganjanavanich & Magnuson, 2011).

Flowing on from this is could be the use of a New Zealand-based counselling modality that facilitates holistic and values-based counselling while incorporating our unique cultural mores – Massey University’s

Whakapiripi-Whakamārama-Whakamana/Attend-Respond-Collaborate (WWW/ARC) pluralistic modality (Lang & Gardiner, 2013).

WWW/ARC is a skills-based, pluralistic approach that incorporates culture but also specifically acknowledges New Zealand's bi-culturalism (Lang & Gardiner, 2013). It facilitates goal setting from a collaborative stance allowing for deep recognition of the individual's culture, values, and needs (Lang & Gardiner, 2013). The pluralistic nature of the model empowers the individual to find their own way and the counsellor to adapt their work to facilitate that (Cooper & McLeod, 2010). Pluralistic work challenges the counsellor to work using the most effective counselling techniques for the client with an awareness that the therapy should constantly evolve, change and develop as the client does (Cooper & McLeod, 2010). From a purely New Zealand perspective WWW/ARC would allow the counsellor to work holistically with the client while meeting cultural obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi (Lang & Gardiner, 2013).

A number of areas of working with the gifted and talented with multipotentiality need to be researched from a New Zealand perspective. The research suggested in the section above could be of particular interest to pursue as the interventions, by their nature, rely on the client's way of being to come to the fore. Working with sandtray and ARC/WWW pluralistically demand differentiation, collaboration and the exploration of values and life stories. These interventions proposed

for research are intended to lead to self-actualisation and empowerment of the individual, goals that have been discussed previously.

SUGGESTED FURTHER RESEARCH

A common theme for further research identified in the literature was the need for interventions to work with multipotentiality and that this should be empirically supported (Colangelo, 2003; Greene, 2002; Kerr & Soldano, 2003, Milgram, 1991; Peterson, 2006). Peterson and Moon (2008) went further in suggesting that empirical research was needed to support all aspects of counselling the gifted and talented and to investigate what modalities may be more appropriate to use. Both issues are a common theme for counsellors: the need to know what method works best and to prove it scientifically (Cooper, 2008).

Sajjadi, Rejskind, and Shore (2001) also noted that investigative research needs to be completed to inform and facilitate earlier awareness of multipotentiality. Kerr's 1990 ERIC Digest is a useful starting point as it describes evidence of multipotentiality across primary and secondary school years.

Research into how multipotentiality specifically affects different sectors of society would also be engaging and useful. This research should include the role of poverty, marginalisation, and culture. It could provide a richer base of understanding for counsellors to work from.

Leung, Conoley and Scheel (1994) suggested research into gender differences would also be useful. Subsequent information published by Reis and Hebert (2008) provides a brief outline of gender difference in gifted and talented children that could be built upon.

Finally, as discussed previously, the glaringly obvious gap in the literature the remaining need for New Zealand research for New Zealand counsellors. Although we can take advice from American and Canadian research, our cultural, educational, and governmental policy systems differ (Mahuika, 2007). We have a long way to go to raise the education of teachers working with gifted and talented students, and yet to do the same with school counsellors may be even further off (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005; Easter, 2011; G. Gallagher, 2011; Mahuika, 2007; R. Moltzen, 2011). And while Peterson and Moon (2008) regret the lack of funding available in America, New Zealand researchers are likely to face similar issues.

CONCLUSION

I am gone quite mad with the knowledge of
accepting the overwhelming number of things
I can never know, places I can never go, and
people I can never be. (Plath, 2007, p.53)

Multipotentiality for gifted and talented individuals is the idea that a number of career paths and interests can be followed. Where it can become a problem is when this choice cannot be made, leading to a

number of serious issues ranging from anxiety to depression to existential dread (Colangelo, 2003; Peterson, 2006).

Counsellors who are able to provide a differentiated service to these clients are in an ideal position to help (Colangelo, 2003). There are a number of recommended interventions that may be helpful, including educating individuals in what they are experiencing; clarifying goals using a holistic, value-based view; mentoring; experiential learning; and planning for a broad, adaptable post-high school education (Silverman, 1993).

Counsellors are also useful advocates for these children within their schools and communities and, in particular, with their parents (Greene, 2002).

From a New Zealand perspective there is effectively no published research to refer to. There are some useful articles regarding counselling the gifted and talented in New Zealand, and these provide a broad introduction to working with the gifted and talented and some of the issues that arise (Blackett & Hermansson, 2005, G. Gallagher, 2011; Hermansson, 2006).

A proposed model for future research is included in this review that may serve as a starting point for research into a model using New Zealand knowledge and culturally adaptable techniques (Lang & Gardiner, 2013).

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