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Bibliotherapy : a technique to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents

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Bibliotherapy : a technique to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy as an instructional technique for resolving social and emotional problems of gifted adolescents. By means of a review of educational and psychological literature, the writer gathered data about the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy in treating the social and emotional problems of the gifted described by Delisle and others.

The lack of bibliotherapeutic empirical studies using gifted adolescents as subjects and conflicting studies on the effectiveness of bibliotherapy to alter social and personality problems led the author to conclude that developmental bibliotherapy is still an experimental technique. However, the literature revealed that the reading and higher level thinking skills of gifted adolescents made them ideal subjects for bibliotherapy. The literature recorded that educators of the gifted and talented are using a wide variety of strategies as well as discussion to enhance the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy.

**BIBLIOTHERAPY: A TECHNIQUE TO MEET
THE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS
OF
GIFTED ADOLESCENTS**

A Graduate Review

Submitted to the

Division of Education for the Gifted

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Carlotta Paul

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This (Research Paper) (Review) or (Project) by: Carlotta Paul

Titled: Bibliotherapy: A Technique to Meet the Social and Emotional
Needs of Gifted Adolescents

Has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the
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The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy as an instructional technique for resolving social and emotional problems of gifted adolescents. By means of a review of educational and psychological literature, the writer gathered data about the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy in treating the social and emotional problems of the gifted described by Delisle and others. The lack of bibliotherapeutic empirical studies using gifted adolescents as subjects and conflicting studies on the effectiveness of bibliotherapy to alter social and personality problems led the author to conclude that developmental bibliotherapy is still an experimental technique. However, the literature revealed that the reading and higher level thinking skills of gifted adolescents made them ideal subjects for bibliotherapy. The literature recorded that educators of the gifted and talented are using a wide variety of strategies as well as discussion to enhance the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy.

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Introduction

As a novice gifted and talented instructor I was perplexed by the social and emotional needs of my students. I had entered the field after sixteen years as a school media specialist. My guidance background was limited, and I had only taken one short course on the social and emotional needs of the gifted. I realized that, if my students failed to develop their emotional intelligence as well as their other intelligences, they would be at a disadvantage for life (Goleman, 1995). Also I grew to believe that, if I ignored their intrapersonal and interpersonal needs, it was unrealistic of me to expect them to reach their full potential.

Jeon (1992) points to Joyce Van Tassel Baska's specific recommendations to help gifted students cope with their concerns. He identifies self understanding, acceptance of giftedness, ability to give and receive criticism, tolerance of self and others, awareness of personal strengths and weaknesses, and curriculum that promotes both cognitive and affective growth as issues of the gifted (Jeon, 1992). Direct observation in my classroom indicated that some of my pupils desperately needed much interpersonal and intrapersonal guidance to cope with their problems. To meet their needs, I sought and incorporated guidance activities including Kohlberg moral dilemmas but felt that I was still not reaching them.

My love of books, experiences as a school media specialist, and my students' interest in reading induced me to consider developmental bibliotherapy for my students' affective needs. Experts in developmental bibliotherapy have suggested that teachers "use feeling responses to literature to stimulate the growth of normal individuals from children, to the elderly" (Hynes, 1980, 36). I believed that books were potent portables that could alter the lives of their readers, and I had witnessed the effects of self prescribed bibliotherapy in libraries.

Why could not bibliotherapy be used to help my students meet their social

and emotional needs? I was familiar with both the literature and the selection tools required for the acquisition of books to use in the process. That knowledge led me to believe that bibliotherapy could be used effectively as an instructional tool to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents. It was this premise that prompted me to search the literature to learn more about the use of developmental bibliotherapy with gifted adolescents.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine through a review of the literature the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy as an instructional method to assist gifted adolescents with their social and emotional problems. The writer investigated the literature to seek answers to the following questions:

- (a) Does empirical research support the use of developmental bibliotherapy?
- (b) Can the developmental bibliotherapy process evoke change in gifted adolescents?
- (c) Are effective strategies available for the implementation of developmental bibliotherapy in gifted education?

Methodology

I began my research at the Cowles Library at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. I initiated my search for current resources in both the ERIC and PsychLit databases, using the descriptors bibliotherapy and gifted children so that materials would apply to the use of the process with gifted children. To answer questions about the history, process, and implementation of bibliotherapy in educational settings, I used the descriptor bibliotherapy in combination with the descriptors history and education. I downloaded and printed all marked records so that copies of articles unavailable from the Cowles Library could be obtained through the Heartland Area Education Agency, Department of Education, and the

Donald O. Rod Library at the University of Northern Iowa. I discovered that relatively few books on the subject were available in either the Cowles Library and the Heartland Area Education Agency. I also attempted to locate titles cited in sources through the state on line database at the Adel Public Library. Because most titles pertaining to bibliotherapy are a part of the librarian's professional collection rather than the general collection, my access to such titles was denied.

Current and retrospective selection tools that subsequently would be used by the writer to compile a personal database of titles to use for bibliotherapy with her students were available from the Adel and Urbandale public libraries. Annotated bibliographies included in the cited articles also were included in the writer's database.

The following criteria were used when examining resources: (a) Did the article contain empirical findings pertaining to the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy on the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents? (b) Did the article provide information regarding historical or general acceptance of the bibliotherapy as a technique? (c) Did the article explain how and why developmental bibliotherapy would affect gifted adolescents? Because so few empirical studies on using developmental bibliotherapy to treat the social and emotional needs of the gifted exist, general practices and empirical studies using other subjects were studied as well.

Delimitations

Initially I focused my investigation for empirical studies from 1988 to 1998 to keep abreast of current research in the field. I discovered that research dealing specifically with the use of bibliotherapy to meet social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents was very limited. Additional retrospective investigation was required as a result. The on line databases only indexed records back to the year

1966. The Cowles Library periodical holdings at Drake University closely corresponded with those on the databases. As a result, my search was limited to the years 1966 to 1998 and relied on secondary sources for research conducted prior to that date.

Definitions

For the purposes of this paper, the writer used the H. A. Moses and J. S. Zaccaria (1969) definition of bibliotherapy: "A process of dynamic interaction between the personality of a reader and the literature he reads - interaction that can be used for personality assessment, adjustment, and growth" will be used (Jeon, 1992). Bibliotherapy is further subdivided by its type of practice.

The bibliotherapy practiced by educators is known either as humanistic or developmental bibliotherapy. Developmental bibliotherapy, by definition uses "the feeling responses to literature to stimulate the growth of normal individuals, from children to the elderly" (Hynes, 1980). The educator can use bibliotherapy preventively or therapeutically. Instructors employing developmental bibliotherapy attempt "to anticipate issues so that the child can make an adjustment to a situation in his or her future" (Rizza, 1997, p.6). Therapeutic use of developmental bibliotherapy is "the attempt to help the child solve an existing problem by bringing him or her through a similar experience vicariously through books" (Frasier,1969, p.2).

The second type of bibliotherapy, clinical bibliotherapy, is utilized "by trained personnel to treat patients in therapy situations and is just one aspect of the treatment process that deals with deep problems" (Rizza, 1997, p.6). Mental health professionals primarily make use of clinical bibliotherapy as an adjunct therapy in the treatment of mild and seriously disturbed patients (Salup & Salup, 1978).

Review of the Literature

The review of literature has been organized into two major sections. The first section summarizes the historical perspective of developmental bibliotherapy from Biblical to modern times. This historical perspective is important to understanding the evolution of developmental bibliotherapy and its acceptance as an educational technique.

The second section addresses the three questions posed in this review:

(a) Does empirical research support the use of developmental bibliotherapy?
(b) Can the developmental bibliotherapy process evoke change in gifted adolescents?
(c) Are effective strategies available for the implementation of developmental bibliotherapy in gifted education? The focus of each question is related to the extent of the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy for implementation in gifted and talented classrooms to meet the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents. Practical, as well as theoretical practices, were examined to determine subject responsiveness and successful methods of implementation for educators of the gifted and talented.

Historical Perspective

Although this study focused on the use of developmental bibliotherapy to treat the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents, both clinical and developmental bibliotherapy were included in this section because of the historical impact of clinical bibliotherapy on the revival of developmental bibliotherapy. The historical perspective, presented here, summarizes the evolution and acceptance of developmental bibliotherapy.

Knowledge of the historical perspective and the evolution of developmental bibliotherapy are essential to understanding the process and its credibility as an instructional technique for both gifted and nongifted students. Because

bibliotherapy is incorporated in conjunction with other techniques in educational and clinical situations, it is difficult to isolate its effects. Thus, its credibility in part must be derived from logic or historical precedent.

The earliest record of bibliotherapy was inscribed on a sign above the library door in the ancient city of Thebes. It read quite simply, "the healing place of the soul" (Riordan & Wilson, 1989, p.506). The etymology of the word itself comes from "two Greek words: biblion, meaning book, and therapeia, meaning service" (Jalongo, 1983, p. 796). "The ancient Greek definition emphasized 'entelechy' that is the progressive towards life and growth that impels us towards health" (Heller, 1987, p.342).

Other classic examples of bibliotherapy are recorded in the Bible. One such tale was the story told by Nathan in II Samuel 11 and 12 to King David to help him confront his guilt for the death of Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite (Shiryon, 1977). The Hebrew prophet related the tale of another murder conspiracy so that David could identify his problem and experience catharsis to relieve his guilt. Ancient literary works such as these clearly illustrate that the power of bibliotherapy to influence behavior, character, and intelligence was recognized early in the history of humankind.

The resources used in my literature review revealed little information about bibliotherapy between Biblical times until the early 1900s. Breu ("n.d.") posits that during this long time period the Catholic Church used the Medieval, Spanish, and Roman Inquisitions to suppress beliefs and teachings differing from those of the Catholic Church. From 1553 until 1963 the Catholic Church distributed indexes banning texts. He believed that such censorship practices were designed to protect the character of congregates and the tenets of the church itself from heresy.

The practice of directing the moral and religious education of children through books and texts continued into the 1900s in Europe and America. Basal

readers like McGuffey's and later, the Rollo Series, taught character education as well as reading (Mandel, 1964). The rags to riches themes of novels by Horatio Alger stressed the importance of American values and the work ethic to immigrants (Curran, 1977).

It was not until the last half of the Twentieth Century that novels came to be written expressly for the entertainment of children (Myracle, 1995). Although the first romantic novels moved away from the singular didactic lessons of the preceding literature, these books still had moral values to be derived from them. Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, L. Frank Baum's The Wizard of Oz, and Louisa May Alcott's Little Women were the among the first romantic novels for children; and each of these had a moral lesson for the reader (Myracle, 1995). The popularity of these books led to the publication of serials such as Tom Swift, Hardy Boys, and Nancy Drew for children and adolescents (Myracle, 1995). The publication of such pleasurable fictional works provided adolescents with protagonists in their own peer group with whom to identify and on which to project their own emotions as they read during the bibliotherapy process.

While children's literature became more entertaining and less sententious in the middle of the Nineteenth Century, adults still imposed didactic control over children's reading. Parents sought guidance from booklists such as those published in 1928 by Edwin Starbuck that recommended and categorized titles by the value taught (Myracle, 1995).

Until the 1940s, the field of bibliotherapy dealt primarily with societal and parental concerns for children. Then, in 1946, Sister Mary Agnes used bibliotherapy to help socially maladjusted orphans (Myracle, 1995). This was the first time that bibliotherapy had been used in an educational setting to help students resolve their problems. Educators continued the prescriptive assignment of books to adolescents with problems through the 1960s (Myracle, 1995). Some educators

continued this practice even longer. In 1973, the high school principal for whom I taught assigned students with discipline problems to listen to Andrew Carnegie's audio cassette series to change their behavior.

It was not until the publication of Pierre Salinger's Catcher in the Rye in 1951 that realistic young adult novels were born (Myracle, 1995). Young adult novels gradually moved away from simplistic approaches in the 1960s to deal with the complex problems facing adolescents in our society such as pregnancy, abortion, drug abuse, alcoholism, rape, divorce, suicide, homosexuality, mental illness, social alienation, and AIDS (Myracle, 1995). Such books provided adolescents a safe way to confront real life dilemmas vicariously while preparing their self-concept for the adjustment to trying situations in their future (Olsen, 1975). This movement to realistic novels, which addressed real life problems in current settings, made identification easier and more effective for those wishing to implement developmental bibliotherapy.

Although developmental bibliotherapy has been practiced for over fifty years in schools, most empirical research on the topic came from the field of clinical bibliotherapy. Samuel Crothers was the first to use bibliotherapy to help his patients understand their problems in the early 1900s (Salup & Salup, 1978). Subsequently, bibliotherapy became a popular technique used by trained counselors to treat hospital patients (Jalongo, 1983). Karl and William Menninger advanced the use of bibliotherapy by encouraging the growth of the library at the Menninger Clinic. Their five year program in bibliotherapy may have started bibliotherapy research. Karl Menninger's book, The Human Mind, and his "Guide to Psychiatric Books" greatly assisted medical librarians (Salup & Salup, 1978).

Dr. Gordon Kaman, psychiatrist and leading advocate of bibliotherapy from 1930 to 1940, emphasized "the importance of reading and the cooperation of physicians and librarians" (Salup & Salup, 1978, p.5). When educators began using

bibliotherapy in the 1940s, Dr. Jerome Schneck, Dr. Melba Duncan, and Dr. Louis Gottschalk all were researching and using bibliotherapy as an adjunct to psychotherapy (Salup & Salup, 1978).

At the end of World War II and again in the 1950s the Veteran's Administration encouraged additional research in bibliotherapy (Salup & Salup, 1978). During this time period physicians experimented with the use of group readings or group bibliotherapy for alcohol and drug abuse. In 1953, Vera Flandorf wrote an outline of bibliotherapy for use with children entitled "Getting Well With Books" (Salup & Salup, 1978).

In the 1960s many advances were made in bibliotherapy. Salup & Salup (1978) describe the establishment of a bibliotherapy clearinghouse under William Technor by the Association of Hospital and Institutional Libraries as well as Library Service and Construction Act Title IVA which was passed by Congress to improve services to state institutions. During this time period two educators, J. S. Zaccaria and H. A. Moses, defined the processes involved in bibliotherapy and explained its use to instructors (Salup & Salup, 1978). The underlying principles of bibliotherapy set down by Zaccaria and Moses are still the basis for effective implementation plans used today.

Psychological research in the 1980s focused on the use of bibliotherapy in self help programs (Rosen, 1987). Between 1960 and 1980 the field of clinical bibliotherapy expanded rapidly. This review of the literature determined that bibliotherapy was employed during this time period to help patients stop smoking, lose weight, overcome their fear of the dark, improve their marital relations, and sexual dysfunctions (Lenkowsky, 1987).

Hebert (1991) warned practitioners that bibliotherapy should not be considered the cure for all problems. The rapid increase in the quantity of empirical studies and plethora of problems treated resulted in confusion about bibliotherapy

in modern times. Therefore, educators and practitioners must sort through poorly designed and overlapping studies in order to locate valid research findings related to the particular application desired (Lenkowsky, 1987)

In summary, the review of the literature demonstrates that humankind has historically accepted the premise that books have the power to effectively influence human behavior and thought. The strategy of bibliotherapy has been used to alter behavior since Biblical times and has been used in the United States for over fifty years.

Empirical Research

The prolonged employment of developmental bibliotherapy in American schools might lead educators to assume that the process was accepted and true. Such an assumption would be false. In fact, one of the most interesting findings of this review of empirical research was the conflicting points of view expressed by experts in the field.

An early review of the literature by Zaccaria and Moses (1969) indicated consensus in the field and did not find a single case where bibliotherapy was ineffective in an educational setting. However, while Schrank, & Engels (1981) and Pardeck & Pardeck (1984) found clinical bibliotherapy to be only relatively effective for assertiveness, attitude change, behavioral change, self development, and as a therapeutic technique, they found it to be ineffective for academic achievement, marital relations, reduction of fear or change in self concept.

The conclusions drawn by Pardeck and Pardeck (1984) regarding the ineffectiveness of bibliotherapy to affect self concept and academic achievement in clinical bibliotherapy have been contradicted by clinical researcher Lenkowsky (1987), as well as several educational researchers. Educational researchers

Calhoun (1987) and Hebert (1991) both advocated using developmental bibliotherapy to improve self awareness and self concept in adolescents. Bohlmann (1986), Ray (1983) and Taylor (1982), all reported success with self concept when the developmental bibliotherapy incorporated group discussion. Educational practitioner Jeon (1992) also strongly recommended the use of developmental bibliotherapy with gifted students to improve their self concept and to alter the aggressive and withdrawn behaviors of underachievers. Based on these studies and the recommendations of practitioners, Calhoun (1987) declared that researchers should agree that bibliotherapy promotes better self perception in school age children.

Even though developmental bibliotherapy has been used in educational settings for some time, its use to treat the social and emotional problems of gifted adolescents is a relatively recent development. Researchers first had to agree that gifted adolescents have unique problems before investigating methods to meet those needs. "Only a few researchers (Colangelo, & Zeffran, 1975; Delisle, 1980; LeVine, 1984; Malone, 1975 ; Torrance, 1975; & Whitmore, 1980) have studied the affective needs of the gifted" (Levine, & Tucker, 1981, p.157). Among the social and self concept concerns identified for gifted children are boredom in school, being misunderstood by teachers, peer acceptance, alienation, perfectionism, worry and anxiety, coercive egalitarianism, dyssynchrony, heightened sensitivity, unreal expectations, gender role problems, and difficulties setting both educational and vocational goals (Frasier, & McCannon, 1981; Levine & Tucker, 1986; Roedell, 1984; & Freeman, 1983). According to Frasier and McCannon (1981), ignoring these issues can lead to the development of negative self images, poor social relationships, feelings of inadequacy, and even achievement problems. Thus, gifted adolescents, like other modern teenagers, are involved in a quest for their own identity (Bueschler, 1985).

Eight research studies found the use of developmental bibliotherapy beneficial to gifted adolescents. Hebert (1991) reported success with his bibliotherapy program which assisted gifted boys with issues relating to gender and giftedness. Heitzmann and Heitzmann (1975), Schrank (1982), Schrank and Engels (1981), Swartz (1981), Weingarten (1956), and Witty (1964) all agreed that bibliotherapy helped gifted children resolve some of their personal and social needs. DiSturco (1984) recorded that developmental bibliotherapy had significant positive effects on both the social and personal development of children.

Salup & Salup (1978) pointed out that the developmental goals of education and bibliotherapy are congruent. That is, both entities attempt to prepare students for psychological maturity, life changes, and character development. Dana and Lynch-Brown (1991) proposed that bibliotherapy enabled children to relate moral principles to real life. However, research studies by Warner (1980) and Tilman (1984) concluded that improvement in attitude change and social skills was short term and did not support therapeutic claims of previous studies (Lenkowsky, 1987).

Thus, it appears from the reviewed literature that the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy to resolve the social and emotional issues of gifted adolescents can not be definitively confirmed from conflicting studies of other target populations. Additional research is needed to confirm its effectiveness with gifted adolescents. However, the lack of definitive research has not deterred many practitioners from continuing to study its effectiveness through experimental use of the technique. Bibliotherapy practitioners and advocates (Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller, 1989; Frasier, & McCannon, 1981; Jalongo, 1983; & Jeon, 1992) strongly recommend the process and provide educational strategies for educators to follow.

None of the educational researchers in this review reported adverse effects of developmental bibliotherapy on any of their subjects. However, in the field of

clinical bibliotherapy, detrimental effects were reported when subjects were deprived of other necessary adjunctive treatments. All of the participating educational practitioners in this review encouraged instructors to practice preventive developmental bibliotherapy rather than prescriptive bibliotherapy whenever possible. Educators were instructed to refer students with abnormal or questionable behavior to school psychologists (Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller, 1989).

Effects on Gifted Adolescents

While the reviewed empirical research on developmental bibliotherapy produced mixed results, researchers agreed that gifted students possess characteristics that make them prime candidates for the process of developmental bibliotherapy. Sisk (1982) suggested that their love for books, interest in others, and ability to empathize enable gifted students to identify with the protagonist during bibliotherapy. According to Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller (1989), some emotionally immature gifted students with higher level thinking skills may already be resolving their problems in the third person, an activity which would predispose them towards the process of developmental bibliotherapy.

Gifted students often have difficulty expressing their feelings during class discussions and psychological exercises according to Halsted (1990). Indeed, I like other gifted educators, have suspected that some of my students have read to escape problems in their lives. They vicariously experienced fame and heroism through the lives and actions of fictional characters. During this process they relieved their stress and enjoyed the literature. "Freud speculated that, during reading, the reader is able to safely release tensions because the writer places him in a position where he can enjoy his daydreams without shame" (Morris, 1973, 62).

Some students, in fact, already may have employed what Jalongo (1983) calls a "self prescribed" form of bibliotherapy. A portion of the aesthetic pleasure

gained by these students is derived from the release of tension from their minds according to Freud (Morris, 1973). While students practicing self-prescribed bibliotherapy may not be aware of the processes involved, educators leading developmental bibliotherapy should be aware of each component of the process and how they affect the reader (Halsted, "n.d.").

The three steps of bibliotherapy identified by Carolyn Shrode in 1949 are identification, catharsis, and insight (Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller, 1989).

Identification and catharsis offer the reader emotional relief, while insight enables the reader to explore with safety possible solutions to their problems. For example, when the gifted adolescents identify with a fictional character during developmental bibliotherapy, they project their own emotions on that character. The process of identification permits gifted students to recognize that others have experienced problems similar to their own (Frasier, 1969); and it ends their sense of isolation and provides a peer group for them (Adderholdt-Eliot & Eller, 1989).

During catharsis, the second step of developmental bibliotherapy, the gifted adolescents who have projected their emotions on the fictional character experience an emotional cleansing (Fuhriman, Barlow, & Wanlass, 1989). In this way, bibliotherapy not only provides for cognitive growth but also affords the reader an opportunity to safely discharge pent up emotions of anger and pain.

Insight is the final step in developmental bibliotherapy. This step requires the gifted students to reflect and problem solve, thus challenging them cognitively and affectively. Gifted students who are reluctant to take risks because of their fear of failure can comfortably confront real life problems in developmental bibliotherapy. It is less threatening to them than direct confrontation (Adderholdt-Elliott & Eller, 1989). They can learn about the problem and explore more than one solution to the problem at the same time. By developing a solution or a plan of action to deal with the problem, gifted students further alleviate their stress and

develop self confidence (Frasier, 1969). They can make mistakes and not suffer the negative consequences as in real life.

Effective developmental bibliotherapy thus provides for both the cognitive and affective growth of its subjects. Although bibliotherapy serves both the cognitive and affective needs of gifted adolescents, the educator should stress the emotional response to the literature so that cognitive concepts do not interfere with the process of identification, projection, and insight (Schlichter & Burke, 1994).

Timpoulis (1968) and Fisher (1968) confirmed in their research that gifted students acquired new skills and behaviors as social learning principles during developmental bibliotherapy. Thus, the insight acquired during developmental bibliotherapy can be applied to real life situations. Through the use of this strategy, gifted adolescents who are able to resolve their problems should develop self confidence and self esteem. Even if gifted adolescents are not ready to recognize the need for change in their lives, they might at least gain a brief moment of respite from their emotional distress.

In this review of the literature I did not find compilations of case studies or quantitative studies of developmental bibliotherapy. According to Heitzmann and Heitzmann (1975), developmental bibliotherapy is primarily assessed using case studies that record observed behavior changes in the subjects because the process deals with the affective domain.

Psychologists, however, frequently have used psychometric tests to determine the effects of clinical bibliotherapy in this review of the literature. A patient would be administered a test like the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule before and after clinical bibliotherapy to determine the effects of the treatment on the patient (Monti, Fink, Norman, Curran, Hayes, & Caldwell, 1979). While empirical research on the effects of developmental bibliotherapy is clearly defined and

accepted by researchers, additional documentation still is needed concerning the effects on its subjects.

Effective Strategies

Some educators of the gifted and talented have elected to practice developmental bibliotherapy in their classrooms because of their students' social and emotional needs in spite of the lack of quantitative data on its effectiveness and effects on gifted adolescents. Such practitioners can be credited with developing implementation and instructional strategies that serve as models for other educators to emulate. I identified four strategies relating to the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy in this review of the literature. One strategy is aimed at the establishment and implementation of an effective developmental bibliotherapy program; while the other three effective instructional strategies are related to the learning environment, student motivation, and follow up activities.

Implementation Strategies.

Frasier and McCannon (1981), Jalongo (1983), Jeon (1992) and Schlichter and Burke (1994) presented strategies for implementing developmental bibliotherapy in classrooms for the gifted. All four sources agreed that conducting a needs assessment should be the first step in developmental bibliotherapy. Such a needs assessment helps to assure that a successful match can be made so that the right book reaches the right child at the right time (Cornett & Cornett, 1980).

Various instruments were recommended to assess entering behavior including interest inventories, and interviews with students, their parents, their teachers, and guidance counselors. Witt, Elliott, Kramer, and Gresham (1994) encouraged instructors to administer an instrument like the Social and Prevocational Information Battery to learn more about their gifted and talented

students' self concepts, interests, and career choices.

In some cases gifted students already may have shared their concerns with their instructor in the gifted and talented classroom. (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1984). Knowledge of the gifted adolescent's needs and a relationship built on trust and understanding between the student and teacher should be established before the process is initiated (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1984).

Next, instructors of the gifted and talented should meet with their school media specialist to select appropriate materials (Jeon, 1992). Readability is a natural concern. If a book is too far below or above the gifted student's ability, there will be problems. When a title is too far beyond a gifted student's ability, the instructor risks damaging the student's self esteem and his or her ability to identify with the fictional character. If the book is too far below the gifted student's ability, the student will not want to be seen reading it (Morgan, 1976).

Young adult novels are frequently used in developmental bibliotherapy because of their simplistic structure, universal themes, present settings, and treatment of problems (Angelotti, 1985). Instructors of the gifted should examine adult literature for their students. These students, who may already be reading adult novels with complex themes and structure, could easily be offended by materials beneath their ability level (Morgan, 1976)

After selecting and purchasing titles, the instructor should sort through and organize the books according to the types of problems, (ie., perfectionism, suicide, and anti-intellectualism) before creating a filing system (Jeon, 1992). A brief summary, type of problem, reading level, and basic bibliographic information can be recorded on a database or card for each book (Jeon, 1992). At this point, the instructor is ready to implement bibliotherapy as a teaching strategy.

Learning Environments.

Developmental bibliotherapy can be practiced effectively in four different learning environments according to Frasier and McCannon (1981). An instructor may use developmental bibliotherapy for large group instruction to address an entire class problem such as anti-intellectualism with the class or for an individual problem that affects an entire class such as socialization problems of an accelerated student in the class (Frasier & McCannon, 1981). They also advocated the use of developmental bibliotherapy for small group and individual instruction, as well as large group instruction. However, Warner (1989) strongly advised educators to practice bibliotherapy preventively in group settings rather than prescriptively. Conversely, Frasier & McCannon (1981) advocated the use of small group instruction with students facing similar emotional problems. Individualized instruction was preferred when assisting students with their self concept. They stressed that a meaningful follow up discussion should be held no matter which approach is used.

Motivational Strategies.

Motivational strategies are used in developmental bibliotherapy to foster student interest, involvement, and focus prior to reading (Frasier, "n.d."). Some of the strategies suggested in this review of the literature require instructors to make both strange and familiar analogies, to ask provocative questions that require examining information from another perspective, or to have students make forecasts using limited information to stimulate student awareness, curiosity, and creativity (Frasier, "n.d."). She also suggested that instructors closely monitor the gifted student's progress. In this way they cannot only observe whether the student

has any problems, but also can encourage creative problem solving and preserve openendedness.

Follow Up Strategies.

After students finish reading their books their instructors should conduct follow up discussion and strategies, which are most essential to the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy according to Bohlmann (1986), Ray (1983), and Taylor (1982). Through such organized activities, the teacher can concentrate on affective learning. Jeon (1992) makes several suggestions in this respect. For example, instructors are encouraged to retell the story stressing events, emotions, relationships, values, and behaviors to gifted adolescents. However, he warns that reading and literature instruction should not be integrated with bibliotherapy because it can detract from the pleasure or purpose of the activity.

While leading follow up discussions, the teacher can identify similar events to those from the reader's life or in the readings. Frasier ("n.d.") proposes that instructors should strive to provoke both introspective and divergent thinking in follow up discussions so that students will further understand and empathize with the protagonist. In this case, Calvin Taylor's taxonomy of questions can be used by the teacher to assure that more than one level of learning is explored during discussion (Sisk, 1982). Frasier maintains that in these discussions the teacher can promote the student's recognition of the relevance of the protagonist's problem to him or her now or in the future. Mock trials, role playing, and other creative dramatic activities also can be used by the instructor to explore character emotions and different viewpoints.

Next, students investigate the consequences of what happened in the story and relate them to behavior. Finally, Frasier states that the instructor and student should problem solve possible solutions to the problem together. Causal

relationships, paradoxes, differing viewpoints, and multiple hypotheses should be investigated with the student (Frasier, "n.d.").

Follow up activities also can be designed to enhance the multiple intelligences and talents of gifted adolescents (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1984). They suggest that talented student artists can be asked to make an impressionistic painting of a character's emotions or to create a work of their own choice. Musically talented students can compose a ballad about the protagonist's life. Gifted student authors can describe their feelings about the book in a letter to its author. Halsted (1990) recommended that instructors have students keep reading notebooks that focus on the themes and ideas read as well as the higher level thinking skills of the student for intrapersonal development (Halsted, 1990).

It is interesting to note that the practices of developmental bibliotherapists differed in kind, not in nature. While warm up and follow up activities varied between practitioners, the theoretical basis did not. Each bibliotherapist recommended titles to the student, monitored student progress while students read, and facilitated student identification with the character and problem solving. Finally, each bibliotherapist selected different motivational and follow up activities to reinforce the process.

Conclusions

As stated earlier, this review of the literature was motivated by the social and emotional needs of gifted students in my classroom. Because of my previous library science training, I hypothesized that I would find developmental bibliotherapy to be a highly effective technique for treating the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents. Instead, I discovered that the literature did not confirm the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy and its effects on gifted adolescents. I found that educational researchers, as well as clinical

researchers, had difficulty isolating bibliotherapy and its effects. (Riordan, & Wilson, 1989). Was it the book they read, the television movie they watched, an e-mail message, or the glare they received from another student that helped them recognize their need to change? Uncontrolled variables and the lack of quantitative research appeared to be a barrier to scientific definition of developmental bibliotherapy in this review.

Educational researchers and practitioners in this review of the literature agreed that gifted adolescents were ideal subjects for developmental bibliotherapy due to their higher level thinking skills, reading comprehension level, and their predisposition toward solving problems in the third person. Although practitioners recommended a wide variety of follow up activities to accompany developmental bibliotherapy, only the strategy of discussion has been found to increase the effectiveness of the process. The same flexibility that permits instructors to vary follow up activities according to their preferences and book content also generates more variables to control in empirical research.

Practitioners who elect to use developmental bibliotherapy will need to select and maintain classroom book collections to insure that materials are available when needed. Selecting literature to use in developmental therapy must be an on going process to assure effective identification of the reader with protagonists in contemporary settings. The success of developmental bibliotherapy is dependent on the reader's ability to identify with the character. If effective matches are not made, the process will not succeed.

Recommendations

Empirical studies isolating the use of bibliotherapy or its effects are rare in both psychoscience and education (Riordan & Wilson, 1989). Educators, like me, who have no empirical proof of the effectiveness of a technique, are reluctant to

use it alone. Pilot studies using a clearly defined procedure and developmental bibliotherapy in isolation are needed to assess its effects and effectiveness. Additional study needs to be conducted related to the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy in meeting the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents. Specific studies using gifted adolescents to ascertain the effects of bibliotherapy on improving self concept and reversing underachievement also are needed.

Educators of the gifted and talented may wish to explore using the bibliotherapeutic process with current films and videos. Adolescents may actually prefer these formats in this technological age. Movies like "Real Genius," "Phenomena," and "Powder" can be used effectively to address the social and emotional needs of gifted students in the classroom.

Although educators of the gifted and talented have a wide variety of follow up activities from which to choose, they should be encouraged to use the strategy of discussion to increase the effectiveness of the process. Until further empirical research verifies the effectiveness of developmental bibliotherapy, educators of the gifted and talented practicing experimental bibliotherapy should be encouraged to use the process as an adjunct to other psychological and social skills instruction.

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