Occupational Potential and Possible Selves of Healthcare Students with Dyslexia: A Narrative Inquiry

Angela Murphy, BHSC, MSc, PGCHE.

Senior Lecturer in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science

Leeds Beckett University

Learning Outcomes:

To understand:

- Occupational potential and possible selves.

- How they can be applied in research within a narrative inquiry framework.

- Some of the implications of growing up with dyslexia (including inhibiting and facilitating factors).

- Some implications of the research findings to education and practice.

Professional Doctorate in Education (Ed D)

The research journey. A personal and professional venture.

Research Aim, Questions and Method

Aim

- Explore the occupational potential (Wicks, 2005) and possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) of healthcare students with dyslexia and consider the strategies put in place in relation to possible selves of the past, present and future.

Research Questions

- How are the possible selves of healthcare students with dyslexia shaped?

- What strategies (if any) are employed to reach possible selves?

- What role (if any) does occupational potential play in reaching desired possible selves and avoiding feared or undesired possible selves?

Method

Up to 3 semi structured interviews with 9 healthcare students with dyslexia studying on level seven/ M level courses.

Methodology

Narrative Inquiry

Temporal
Personal Social
Spatial (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000)

Possible Selves

"What they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming" (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

Occupational Potential

"What can be brought into actuality through engagement in occupation"

(Asaba and Wicks, 2010 p. 122).

Ethics

Research ethics granted by university Local Research Ethics Coordinator, 13 November 2014

Considerations:

- Recruitment of level 7 full time healthcare students with dyslexia via course leaders. Anonymity retained. Pseudonyms used. Confidentiality.

- Tutor and student relationship – No benefits and carefully managed interviews whereby the students were in control of disclosure.

- Informed consent (verbal and signed).

- Reflexivity – journals and letter writing (Finlay and Ballinger, 2006; Clandinin and Connolly, 2000).

- Hearability (Gilligan et al., 2003).

Dyslexia

- A neurodiversity, "a normal human difference that should be tolerated and respected in the same way as other human differences" (Griffin and Pollak, 2009, p. 25).

- The word 'dyslexia' comes from Greek and means 'difficulty with words'. It is a lifelong, usually genetic, inherited condition and affects around 10% of the population (BDA, ND).

- Characteristics include difficulties with processing, working and short term memory and can affect spelling, reading, maths …each person is unique!

Dyslexia – Reality v' Myth

- Many parents struggle to gain support for children in school (Rose, 2009; Lamb, 2009; Gove, 2011). Perverse Incentives (Gray et al., 2013).

- Labelling/ diagnosis is often avoided and is problematic (Riddick, 2011), expensive and advised against (Gove, 2011). Term: Specific Learning Disability tends to be used.

- A Socially Constructed Myth - Learned helplessness (Elliot, 2005; Elliot & Gregerinko, 2014).

- Social Reality of Dyslexia - between 20-51% of offenders have dyslexia (MacDonald, 2009a; 2009b; 2010; 2012).

Dyslexia – Reality v' Myth

- Biological explanation for Dyslexia - Brocas and Wernickers areas (Frontal and Temporal lobes - language) (Christodoulou et al., 2014).

- Strategies can help – neuroplasticity (Heim, 2015).

- Disclosure can be a complex issue, particularly in healthcare (Dearnley, 2010; Nalavany, Carawan & Sauber, 2013). Seen by some as a fixed phenomenon (Evans, 2014).

Acts and Scenes

- Hearability (Gilligan et al., 2003)

- Spirit and Audibility (Douglas and Carless, 2013)

- Narrative inquiry should articulate new knowledge in a way that engages new audiences and shines a light on the valuable experiences of the people whose voices the research represents (Clandinin and Connolly, 2000).

- Acts and scenes.

- The audience is asked to picture a stage with students siting in a line and a light shining down on them as they speak. I am positioned next to them.
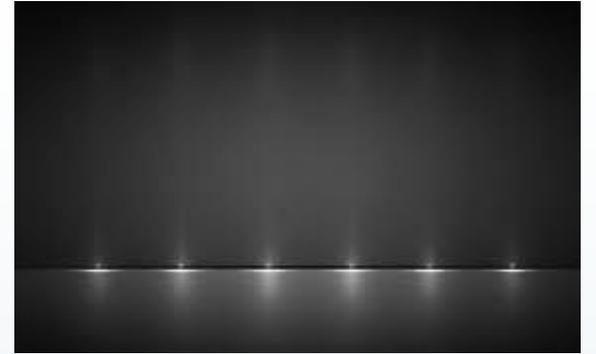
Abigail

When I was in reception the teachers pulled my Mum and said, "She's really intelligent, she can read. The others can't read".

My Mum was like, "Are you sure?"

And what I was doing was, I was pretending I could read. I was picking up books we'd read in class and was pretending to read them to the other kids. Using the pictures or how I remembered the stories.

My mum knew I couldn't read. I would just pretend to be reading when actually I wasn't and it took me a long time to (learn to) read because I was convinced I was really clever but I was pretending to read. The teachers would have to sit me down and go over the words. I'd go off the pictures or off what I knew of the story. They would have to keep telling me to read the words. I was just telling a story with a book in my hand. (Laughs) On the first day of reception I sat down with this girl and was like, "I'll read you a story" (laughs).

Abigail

So .. I went through primary school and quite quickly the teachers realised I wasn't a genius. I couldn't read and my main struggle was spelling …I struggled even at a young age.

I got more and more aware of it as I came up through primary school…I was always in …mainly the middle or bottom table as I came up through primary school into years 5 and 6.

We had to do spelling tests where we had to stand up and say the word. It was awful! I just, I can write them better. …

I always knew. I find that hard. I always knew I'd be really upset … if a spelling test was coming along and then I can really remember in…year 5, a teacher stood me up and said "this is the worst speller in the world" and asked me to spell, … a 3 letter word …'ton' and I put an 'e' on the end but I was panicking as soon as I stood up. I was really panicking. I was so upset (crying), I, (crying).

Mum was quite angry…

Abigail

Both my parents were teachers, they really wanted me to be a teacher. I don't know if it was because of my skill set or because I always played teachers, but they really wanted me to be a teacher. Me and my mum had a really deep chat and she told me she felt really guilty that my (older) sister Rachel was probably dyslexic but no one ever knew. She hated school and got in with the wrong crowd and had children very young.

She feels she failed a little bit with my sisters because she hasn't given them the confidence to go and do what they want. She says she's confident with me that what I want I'll just go and get it.

Abigail

Mum took me to the local sports centre and she said "there's this, I've signed you up. Would you like to go?" And I was like, "oh, I'd love to". So, I tried it and I used to train most days of the week and I remember I got injured when I was 16.

Yeah, it gave me a lot of confidence in myself. So actually, I kind of took it because I did this and my mum loved supporting me and that was my thing that was different from my sisters so like I benefitted from gymnastics and sport. I spent so much time there when I was younger and I loved it. I loved the discipline, the organization; I loved that I was good at it. It gave me a lot.

Analysis and Findings

- Occupational Identity begins at an early age (Christiensen, 1999).

- Occupational Potential is fluid and dynamic (Asaba and Wicks, 2010).

- Childhood possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) and identities are challenged.

- Social and occupational injustices are apparent and influence occupational potential.

- Families act to counteract this where possible: particularly with occupations and co occupations, helping the participants to reach occupational potential, develop occupational identities, desirable possible selves (PS) and avoid undesirable PS.

- Parental Possible Selves: The parent of a teacher, member of NASA, an Occupational Therapist!

- Occupation is used to develop capacities and possible selves but also possible selves infuse the meaning and purpose of occupations as environments are cued and agency is instrumentalised.

Abigail, "I loved that. I was good at it. It gave me a lot".

Implications to occupational therapy practice

Occupational Identity, Potential and Possible Selves
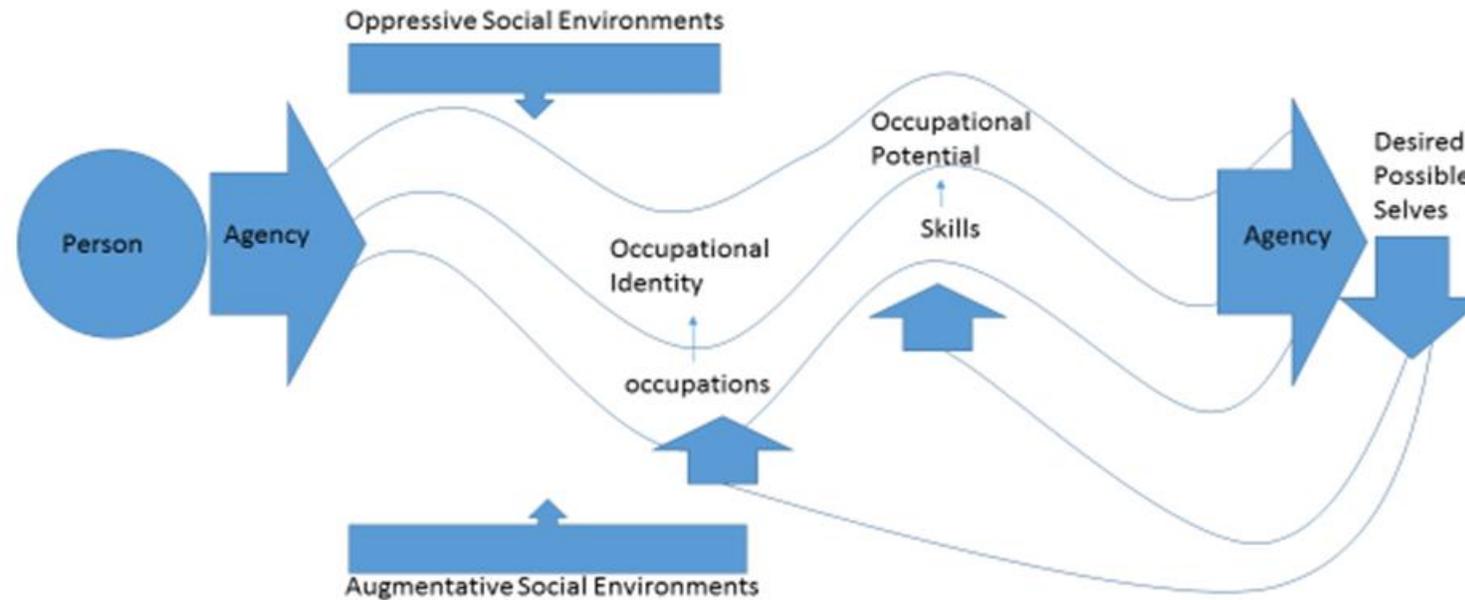
Implications to Occupational Therapy

- Include occupational potential in occupational therapy programmes (Wicks, 2005).

Consider Occupational Therapists positioning in relation to dyslexia:

- Diagnostic process?

- Interventions to promote reaching occupational potential in study skills, learning/ engagement in education

- Reduction of school disengagement/ criminal justice system.

- Desirable possible selves – Occupational Therapy role.

- Occupational Possible Selves Model…post doctoral work.

Questions and Thank you
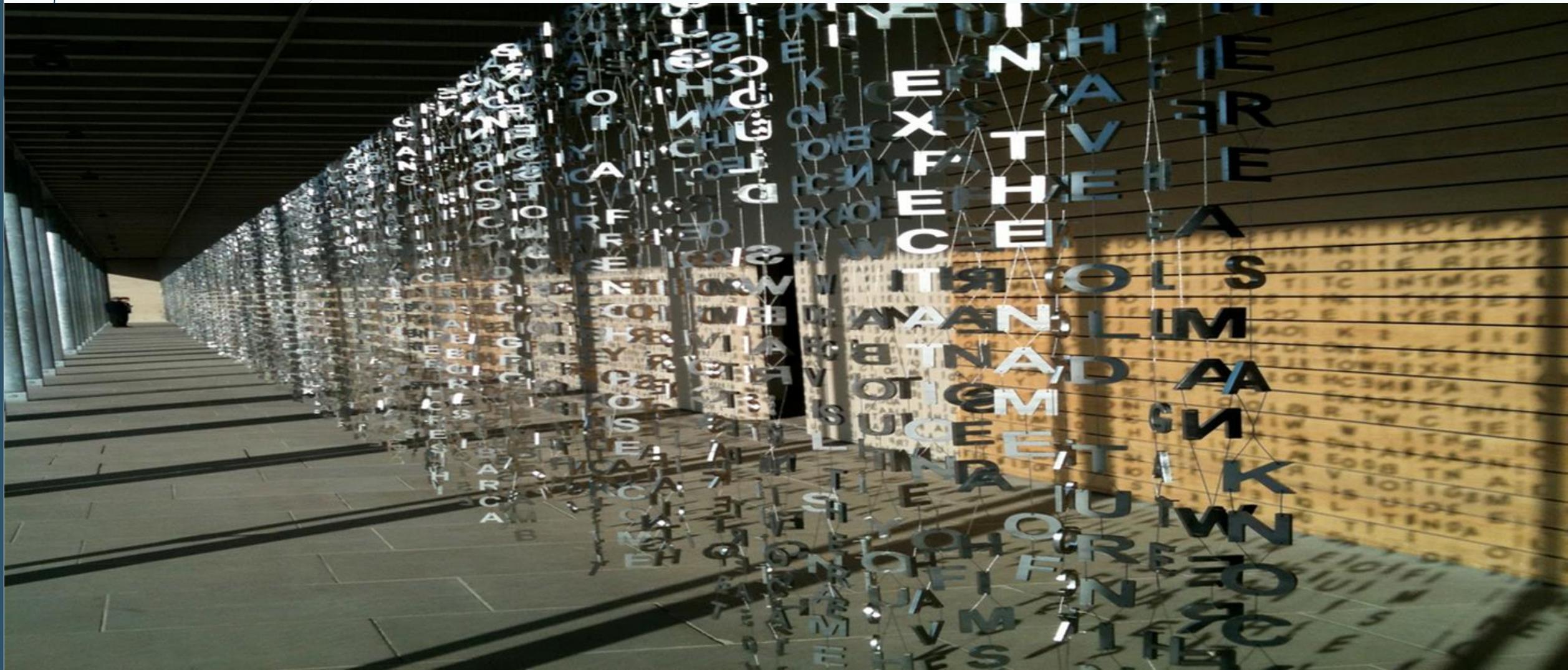
References

- Agamben, G. (1999) **Potentialities: Collected Essays in Phillosophy**. (D heller Rozen, Trans.)Stansford, CA: Stanford University Press

- Asaba, M. (2005) **"I'm not much different": Occupation, Identity and Spinal Cord Injury in America**. Dissertation Abstracts International, B 66/06, 3097

- Asaba, M. and Wicks, A. (2010) Occupational Terminology. **Journal of Occupational Science,** 17 (2) p. 120-124

- Bowlby, J. (1958) The Nature of the Child's Tie to his Mother. **International Journal of Psycho-analysis**, 39. Pp350-373

- Bowlby, J. (1969) Attachment and Loss, volume 1: **Attachment**. New York. NY: Basic Books.

- Christiansen, C. (1999) The 1999 Eleanor Sleagle Lecture. Defining Lives: Occupation as Identity: An essay on competence, coherence, and the creation of meaning. **American Journal of Occupational Therapy**, 53 (6) pp. 547-558

- Clandinin, J. and Connelly, M. (2000) **Narrative inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research,** San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Clandinin, J. (2007) **Hand Book of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology**. Sage Publications Limited. London.

- Dearnley, C. Elliott, J. Hargreaves, J. Morris, S. Walker, L. Walker, S. Arnold, C. (2010) Disabled people effective practitioners: Enabling a healthcare work force which reflects society **The International journal of Inter-disciliplinary Social Sciences** 5 (8) pp. 259-274

- Department of Children Schools and Families (2009a) *Identifying and Teaching Children and Young People with Dyslexia and Literacy Difficulties.* ***An independent Report from Sir Jim Rose to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families*** http://www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/assets/Uploads/The-Rose-Report-June-2009.pdf

- Department of Children Schools and Families (2009b) **Lamb Inquiry Special educational needs and Parental Confidence**; Crown Copywrite: www.dcsf.gov.uk/lambinquiry

- Department for Education (2011) **Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability- A consultation**. Crown copyright http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eorderingdownload/green-paper-sen.pdf

- Douglas, K. and Carless, D. (2013) An Invitation to Performative **Research Methodological Innovations Online** 8 (1) p. 53-64

- Elliott, J. (2005) The Dyslexia Debate Continues – Response, **The Psychologist** 18 (12) pp. 728-729

- Elliott, J. and Grigerenco, E. (2014) **The Dyslexia Debate**. Cambridge University Press: New York.

- Evans, W. (2014) "If they can't tell the difference between duphalac and digoxin you've got patient safety issues". Nurse Lecturers Constructions of Student's Dyslexic Identities in Nurse Education. **Nurse Education Today** 34 pp. 41-46

- Gray, P. Norwich, B. Stobbs, P. and Hodgson, S. (2012) The Coalition Government's Policy on SEND: Aspirations and Challenges? **Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs**, 14 (2) pp. 120-138.

- Griffin, E. and Pollak, D. (2009) Student Experiences of Neurodiversity in Higher Education: Insights from the BRAINHE Project. **Dyslexia**, 15. Pp. 23-41

- Humphry, R. (2005) Model of Process Transforming Occupations: Exploring Societal and Social Influences. **Journal of Occupational Science**, 12 (1) pp. 36-44

- Kerr, H. (2001) Learned Helplessness and Dyslexia: A Carts and Horses Issue? *Reading, Literacy and Language* p82-85

- Kielhofner, G. (2008) **Model of Human Occupation: Theory and Application** (4th edition). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Williams and Wilkins.

- Laliberte Rudman, D. (2002) Linking Occupation and Identity: Lessons Learned through Qualitative exploration. **Journal of Occupational Science,** 9 (1) pp12-19

- MacDonald, S. (2009a) Windows of Reflection: Conceptualising Dyslexia using the Social Model of Disability *Dyslexia* 15, pp. 347-362

References

- MacDonald, S. (2009b) Towards a Social Reality of Dyslexia British Journal of Learning Disabilities 38, pp. 271-279

- MacDonald, S. (2010) **Crime and Dyslexia: A Social Model Approach**. Saarbrücken, VDM Verlag Dr. Müller p. 432

- MacDonald, S. (2012) Biographical pathways into criminality: understanding the relationship be-tween dyslexia and educational disengagement. **Disability & Society,** 27 (3) pp. 427-440.

- Markus, H. and Nurius, P. (1986) Possible Selves. **American Psychologist,** 41 (9) pp. 954-969.

- Nalavany, B. Carawan, L. and Bauber, S. (2015) Adults with Dyslexia, an invisible Disability: the Mediational Role of Concealment on Perceived Family Support and Self Esteem. **British Journal of Social Work,** 45 pp. 568-586.

- Oyserman, D. Brickman, D. and Rhodes, M. (2007) School Success, Possible Selves, and Parent School Involvement. **Family Relations,** 56 pp. 479-489.

- Phelan, S Kinsella, E. (2009) Occupational Identity: Engaging in Socio cultural perspectives. **Journal of Occupational Science,** 16 (2) pp. 85-91

- Phelan, S. Kinsella, E. (2014) Occupation and Identity: Perspectives of Children with Disabilities and their Parents. **Journal of Occupational Science,** 21 (3) pp. 334-356

- Riddick, B. (2011) Dyslexia and Inclusion: Time for a social model of disability perspective? *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 11 (3) pp. 223-236

- Scheffler, I. (1985) **Of Human Potential: an Essay in the Philosophy of Education**. Boston: Routledge and Keagan Paul.

- Tse, S. Yuen, Y. and Suto, M. (2014) Expected Possible Selves and Coping Skills among Young and Middle-aged Adults with Bipolar Disorder. **East Asian Archive of Psychiatry**, 24 (3) p. 120

- Wilcock, A. (1999) Reflections on Doing, Being and Becoming. **Australian Occupational Therapy Journal,** 46, pp. 1–11

- Wicks, A. (2001) Occupational Potential: A Topic Worthy of Exploration, **Journal of Occupational Science**, 8:3, pp. 32-35

- Wicks, A. (2005) Understanding Occupational Potential **Journal of Occupational Science,** 12 (3) pp. 130-139

- Zhu, S. Tse, S. Cheung, S. and Oyserman, D. (2014) Will I get there? Effects of Parental Support on Children's Possible Selves. **British Journal of Educational Psychology,** pp. 1-19

- Images

- https://www.google.co.uk/search?q=google+images&espv=2&biw=919&bih=643&site=webhp&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0ahUKEwjU09zq26DQAhVaF8AKHQ5jA8UQ_AUIBigB#q=sculpture&tbm=isch&tbs=rimg%3ACcSlkhPNmmZGljg9YI7-7NTK5ckAqdFTmwjwlNcppC6lm7V8hChQmlQBcDb1FKrqceG6esK_1K_13hXP1nO08JK5OfYioSCT1gjv7s1MrlEeZLzSGu4yvMKhIJyQCp0VObCPARazY-uvghPScqEgmU1ymkLoibtRHmHy4FsXvW5SoSCXyEKFCaVAFwEasVjibXxEonKhIJNvUUqupx4boRJfNbh3w8skkqEgl6wr8r_1eFc_1RGSdGgshwBWhyoSCWc7Twkrk59iEQSd3UhoJuHi&imgrc=R8EQTQliuq3lQM%3A