Social and Affective Concerns High-Ability Adolescents Indicate They Would Like to Discuss With a Caring Adult: Implications for Educators

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Abstract

This exploratory study investigated the social and affective concerns of 280 high-ability students in Grades 5 through 12 who participated in a summer residential program. Content analysis of responses from an open-ended survey indicated that high-ability adolescents expressed concerns regarding feelings and emotions, future aspirations, and relationships. How these social and affective concerns differed across gender, age, and among U.S. students, international students, and Native American subgroups were also investigated. Boys would like to discuss puberty and maturity more than girls; students in early adolescence cared about feelings, whereas those in late adolescence wanted to discuss future aspirations; Native American students had similar concerns to those of other students; however, Diné students were concerned about personal issues and bullying. These findings provide researchers and educators in the field of gifted education with new perspectives regarding social and affective concerns of high-ability students.

In the past decade, the importance of the social and affective needs of high-ability students and the services that can be provided to meet these needs have received increased attention in the field of gifted education (Cross & Cross, 2012; Hébert, 2011; Moon, 2009; Peterson, 2009b; Peterson, Assouline, & Jen, 2015; Reis & Renzulli,

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2004; VanTassel-Baska, 2009). Robinson, Reis, Neihart, and Moon (2002) concluded that "there is no research evidence that gifted children or youth—as a group—are inherently any more vulnerable or flawed in adjustment than any other group" (p. 268). They also suggested that researchers and educators pay attention to the influence of the interaction between individuals' gifted characteristics and environments, which may cause high-ability students to have qualitatively different and sometimes negative life experiences (Robinson et al., 2002).

Affective Development of High-Ability Adolescents

The social and affective development of high-ability adolescents is influenced by their asynchronous development, which refers to the uneven development between mental age and chronological age among high-ability students (Silverman, 2012). Thus, high-ability adolescents may experience qualitatively different developmental challenges from their non-high-ability peers. For example, studies on bullying among high-ability students revealed that due to their heightened sensitivities, some of them may experience more distress and may be more disturbed by being bullied than their non-high-ability peers (Peterson & Ray, 2006a). Robinson et al. (2002) called for interventions to meet the social and affective needs of high-ability youth.

In response to this call, researchers identified certain target behaviors and characteristics of high-ability students and designed interventions using particular theoretical frameworks. For example, literature indicated that perfectionism was one of the common characteristics of high-ability individuals (e.g., Greenspon, 2000; Grobman, 2006; Schuler, 2002; Speirs-Neumeister, Williams, & Cross, 2009). To enhance healthy pursuits of excellence among 153 gifted students in Grades 6 through 8, Mofield and Chakraborti-Ghosh (2010) designed a guidance affective curriculum to decrease self-critical tendencies inherent in perfectionism. They found that the maladaptive perfectionists in the experimental group in which the curriculum was implemented had statistically significant lower scores on concerns over mistakes, doubts about actions, and parental expectations and parental criticism than gifted students in the control group.

Other researchers have addressed the social and emotional development of gifted individuals from a developmental perspective (e.g., Colangelo, 2003; Peterson, 2003, 2007). In a developmental approach, the primary purpose is to establish an environment for gifted students' educational growth rather than conducting therapy and solving problems (Colangelo, 2003). Peterson (2007) defined the developmental perspective in counseling as an approach to address the developmental challenges that all children and adolescents face, including gifted individuals. Such challenges include how to deal with stressors and face complex emotions related to everyday living. However, limited empirical research has been conducted from the developmental perspective. Peterson and Lorimer (2011) conducted a study from the developmental perspective; they implemented a series of small-group discussions with 260 students in a nonsectarian, coeducational private school setting for students in Grades 5 through 8. The discussion topics included universal developmental challenges (e.g., accomplishments, bullying, decision making) rather than pathology or crises, and these topics were generalized from

researchers' clinical experiences and the book, *The Essential Guide for Talking With Gifted Teens* (Peterson, 2008). Peterson and Lorimer (2011) found that group work required complex student-student, student-teacher interactions. Furthermore, although one purpose of the intervention was to build a positive environment, it took time to change the school system. From the developmental perspective, this type of study approached high-ability students from less of a conceptual framework but more of a practical perspective, shifting from studying the characteristics of high-ability students to examining the effectiveness and appropriateness of services. Moreover, Peterson and Lorimer (2011) focused more on the proactive, prevention-oriented approach, which was identified as one of the important ways to help students' positive development (Erford, 2010; Jen, 2014; Peterson, 2009a).

Social and Affective Concerns of High-Ability Adolescents

Students of all ages experience developmental transitions and search for their identities. In adolescence, finding out "who am I" is an important issue (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). Traditionally, the adolescence period is identified as ages 12 to 20 (Erickson, 1968; Miller, 2011), but, recently, this time period has been extended, because young people mature earlier physically, and individuals may delay entering work. For example, Moon and Dixon (2015) suggested that gifted educators consider the adolescence period as ages 10 to 22 and referred the stages as early adolescence (ages 10-13), middle adolescence (ages 14-17), and late adolescence (ages 18-22). Peterson et al. (2015) referred to adolescence as teen years (ages 13-19, which correspond to Grades 6 through 12) when they discussed the social and emotional development of gifted adolescents. Because the definition of adolescence varies, in this study, due to the nature of the program in which participants were enrolled and how they were grouped for classes, we identified early adolescents as ages 10 to 12, middle adolescents as ages 13 to 14, and late adolescents as ages 15 to 18.

Limited research has been conducted to identify what social and affective concerns high-ability students report. Peterson (2000) used a retrospective approach to survey 97 college-age young adults, including 44 high achievers, 22 moderate achievers, 20 moderate underachievers, and 11 extreme underachievers (Peterson & Colangelo, 1996). She found that as a whole group, these high-ability students identified autonomy, significant relationships, identity, and career decisions as challenges for high-ability students at the post-secondary level. Yoo and Moon (2006) investigated high-ability students' counseling needs from the perspective of their parents. They found that boredom, educational planning, and concerns regarding talent development programs were the three major counseling needs identified by parents of high-ability students ages 4 through 18. In their study, parents of high-ability adolescents particularly emphasized the need for career planning. Wood (2010) conducted a study of 153 talented high school students who participated in a talent development program focused on visual and performing arts. She investigated what counseling services students received in schools and designed a choice menu to examine what school counseling services these high-ability students preferred in the academic and career domains. She found that not

being able to make a flexible outline or course blueprint best tailored to their needs and interests, and not being able to meet with adults with similar career interests, were the two biggest concerns among these students. Although these researchers have explored the social and affective concerns of high-ability adolescents, one major limitation was the racial homogeneity of the participants; the majority of them were White. In addition, the data of the first two studies were collected over a decade ago, and the third one primarily focused on students' academic and career concerns rather than their overall developmental needs. Thus, a finer understanding of the social and affective needs of contemporary, diverse, high-ability adolescents is warranted.

Multiple Dimensions of High-Ability Adolescents' Social and Affective Well-Being

When implementing interventions to improve high-ability students' social and affective well-being, educators and researchers should consider multiple dimensions, including degree of advancement, gender, age, ethnicity, language, income, sexual orientation, internal discrepancies in ability level, and disabilities (Robinson et al., 2002). In this study, we are particularly interested in the variables of gender, age, and cultural background.

First, gender is widely discussed as playing a crucial role in the development of adolescents (Broderick & Blewitt, 2010). High-ability students of different genders are more alike than different in their abilities and how they develop their interests and career aspirations (Kerr, Vuyk, & Rea, 2012). For example, high-ability students from both genders may face challenges caused by gender stereotypes (e.g., Cross & Cross, 2012; Erford, 2010; Hébert, 2011) and gender inequality (Neff, Cooper, & Woodruff, 2007) in society. Kerr et al. (2012) found that when high-ability adolescents explored relationships and career choices in depth and attempted to balance their personal and public expectations, they were influenced by gender stereotypes. High-ability female adolescents may face how to balance relationships and aspirations, and high-ability male adolescents may be challenged by the expectation that boys are encouraged to become involved in athletics (Kerr et al., 2012).

Second, in adolescence, age plays a significant role in several ways. Peer relationships in later grades become more socially complex than those in earlier grade levels. As a result, adolescents in higher grades need to develop more complex social interactional skills, cultivate better observational skills to ascertain emotions behind behaviors, and navigate in a larger social world (Peterson et al., 2015). In a prominent study in the field of adolescent development, Brown, Clasen, and Eicher (1986), with 1,027 students from Grades 6 through 12, found that peer pressure perceived by adolescents changed with age. In particular, perceived peer involvement showed a weak, inverted, U-shape age trend with a peak at age 15. Pressures toward misconduct steadily increased with age, and antisocial peer pressures displayed no clear age trend. Previous studies on high-ability students also indicated the students' social and affective needs were changed as they matured. For example, Yoo and Moon (2006) found that according to the parents of high-ability children, high-ability adolescents need more career counseling than elementary or preschool students.

Third, different cultural backgrounds also influence the process of how adolescents build their identity (Erford, 2010), and high-ability students may be influenced by the interaction between their diverse cultural backgrounds and their gifted characteristics (Hébert, 2011; Kitano, 2012; Peterson, 1999). With personal identity being established during adolescence, high-ability students are influenced by the homogeneous academic group and by their ethnicity (Worrell, 2012). For example, Strand and Peacock (2002) found that Native American youths felt more comfortable when they were able to balance their own culture with the mainstream culture in school. Despite the importance of cultural backgrounds, few researchers (e.g., Garces-Bacsal, 2010) have explored social and affective concerns of ethnically different and culturally diverse high-ability students, and even fewer studies have focused on comparisons among different cultural groups.

In addition, in the field of gifted education, Native American students are among the most underserved populations (Gentry, Fugate, Wu, & Castellano, 2014), and counseling resources on the reservations are limited. Native American students are also underrepresented in summer enrichment programs, despite studies showing that high-ability Native American students experienced academic and social benefits after participation (Raborn, 2002; Wu & Gentry, 2014). Only a few universities and institutions provided high-ability Native American students with opportunities to share their social and affective concerns. For example, through Project HOPE+[1] (Having Opportunities Promotes Excellence; Gentry, 2011), beginning in 2012, high-ability Diné, Ojibwe, and Lakota students from five different reservation communities received full scholarships to participate in a 2-week, summer residential program for gifted, creative, and talented youth. However, studies on the social and affective concerns of high-ability Native American adolescents do not exist.

Therefore, this exploratory study adopts a developmental perspective and aims to investigate the social and affective concerns of high-ability adolescents and how these concerns differ across gender, age, and cultural backgrounds. Specifically, the study explores the social and affective topics high-ability adolescents who participated in a university-based residential program indicated that they would like to discuss with a caring adult. Results from this study will add to the limited literature about social and affective concerns of high-ability adolescents from different cultural backgrounds, particularly Native youth from five communities on four reservations. This research focuses on the social and affective needs of contemporary adolescents and provides researchers, educators, and counselors with information on topics they can include in the curriculum to satisfy the social and affective needs of high-ability adolescents.

Method

Setting

This study took place during a month-long summer residential enrichment program at a Midwestern university. The program focuses on offering high-quality, challenging enrichment in areas of student interest typically not offered in regular school for high-ability students in Grades 5 through 12 (Gentry, 2011). To be admitted to the program, students submit an essay or alternative media presentation addressing their

motivation to participate in the program. In addition, they provide two documents supporting their ability and involvement in the talent area in which they wish to enroll (e.g., transcript with grade point average [GPA] at or above 3.5/4.0; minimum IQ score of 120; achievement or aptitude test result at or above 90th percentile; recommendation letters, awards, or certificates; Gifted Education Resource Institute, 2015). Based on these selective criteria, students who are accepted by the program are defined as high-ability students for this study. The students participating in the program are placed into three subprograms by grade level. During the residential program, students in Grades 5 and 6 are grouped together in one subprogram; those in Grades 7 and 8 are in another subprogram; and others in Grades 9 through 12 participate in the third subprogram. Their courses, dorm rooms, and counseling groups are arranged in accordance to these groups. The students in Grades 5 and 6 can choose to participate in 1 or 2 weeks of programming in which they take one course each week for 6 hr per day. Those in Grades 7 and 8 and in Grades 9 through 12 can choose to participate in 2 or 4 weeks of programming in which they take two courses each day for 2 weeks for a total of 6 hr per day. When students are not in class, they participate in social activities, competitions, talent shows, field trips, counseling group discussions, and activities, and they also have leisure time. Diversity is one of the hallmarks of this residential program, as it enrolls students from across the United States, including students from three different Native American nations (i.e., Diné, Ojibwe, Lakota) and from around the world, with approximately one third of the participants receiving scholarships or financial aid enabling them to attend.

In 2012, a small-group affective curriculum model was developed and implemented; it served as a guidance component in the residential program, and all participants engaged in this curriculum. The affective curriculum model was designed and implemented not only to serve as a guidance component to help high-ability students positively develop their social- and affective- coping skills, but also to help them explore post-secondary options and future careers. In the 45-min affective curriculum group time, eight to 12 students from the same subprogram and same gender with mixed ethnicity were grouped together and guided by a same-gender camp counselor to discuss topics related to universal developmental challenges (e.g., stress, stereotypes, family). These meetings occurred three times per week. For most topics, detailed suggestions and background knowledge of the topics were cited from the book, *Essential guide for talking with gifted teens* (Peterson, 2008). Activity sheets from the book or newly designed specific topics were used to help participants self-reflect, and they were particularly helpful for seemingly more introverted adolescents and specifically those participants whose native language was not English ($n = 87$). The choices of these topics were based on the affective curriculum designers' expertise, previous studies, and age appropriateness for different stages of adolescence (Jen, Moon, & Gentry, 2015).

Research Design

This study was exploratory in nature. We used content analysis to cluster the responses to categories and reported the frequency of each category (Wolcott, 2009). By using

Table 1. Response Rate of the Study.

	Age (male/female)						
	5th to 6th graders		7th to 8th graders		9th to 12th graders		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	Total
Program participants	83	81	54	44	64	27	353
Participants of this study	62	71	40	33	49	25	280
Response rate (%)	74.70	87.65	74.07	75	76.56	92.59	79.32

this approach, we were able to investigate whenever any differences existed in each category regarding the variables being examined (e.g., gender differences, age differences). We quantified the responses that the student participants reported in an open-ended question by counting frequencies and categorized them based on their similarities. We also qualitatively analyzed the meanings and made inferences about these responses.

Participants

Three hundred fifty-three high-ability fifth- through 12th-grade students from different countries (e.g., China, Colombia, India, and South Korea) participated in a university-based summer residential program in 2012. Out of 353 program participants, 298 (84.42%) participants submitted the survey, and, among them, 280 (79.32%) completed the survey. Thus, these 280 students were included as participants in this study (see Table 1 for detailed survey response rates). Based on students' self-reported geographic and residency information, 71 were international students coming from outside the United States, including 54 Asians and 17 Hispanics. Of the remaining 209 domestic students from the United States, 84 were White, 69 were Native Americans, 23 were Asians, 12 were Hispanics, seven were African Americans, five were mixed race, one was "Other," and eight did not provide a response. The breakdown of their demographic information is listed in Table 2.

Instrument and Research Question

This study used a non-standardized questionnaire with open-ended questions to inquire about the social-affective concerns of high-ability students rather than using an existing instrument to investigate serious clinical concerns (e.g., Gust, 1996). The six-question feedback form was designed by the first author with guidance from an expert in the field of school counseling (see the appendix). The first five questions focused on students' experiences in the small-group discussion during a summer residential program (e.g., "the most memorable topics discussed in your groups"). Kerr and Ghrist-Priebe (1988) found that high-ability students who participated in a career-counseling

Table 2. Demographic Information of the Participants in the Study.

		White	Asian		Native American	Hispanic		African American	Mixed race/Other/ no response	Total
		U.S.	U.S.	I	U.S.	U.S.	I	U.S.	U.S.	
5th to 6th graders	M	21	3	8	17	4	4	2	3	133
	F	19	11	7	27	2	3	0	2	
7th to 8th graders	M	21	5	5	6	1	0	0	2	73
	F	6	3	3	11	2	5	1	3	
9th to 12th graders	M	9	1	27	2	2	3	3	2	74
	F	8	0	4	6	1	2	1	2	
Total participants		84	77		69	29		7	14	280

The column group header "Ethnicity and cultural backgrounds (U.S./international)" spans all ethnicity columns.

Note. International and U.S. participants were categorized based on students' geographic and residency information. International participants traveled from outside the United States. U.S. participants were domestic students who lived in the United States.

workshop were more likely to talk about their career development with adults after 2 months than those who did not participate. Thus, the last question, which was the focus of this study, was added so that we could understand these high-ability students' perceptions of "something you wish you could discuss with a caring adult sometime." Three blanks were provided for the last question, and 161 participants filled in one answer whereas 119 participants provided two or more answers. The overarching research question that guided the study was as follows:

> **Research Question 1:** What social-affective concerns do high-ability adolescents report that they want to discuss with a caring adult?

Data Collection and Analysis

In the last meeting of the affective curriculum groups, students completed the survey as part of the final reflection activity. The group facilitators conducted a brief final discussion with students and delivered the survey to all participants. The students were given 30 min to complete the survey, but it only took students between 8 and 20 min to complete. The responses to the question "something you wish you could discuss with a caring adult sometime" were usually brief, with many students simply listing a topic. Thus, we used a content analysis method and combined different responses to create meaningful categories, conducting frequency counts of the different categories to provide a sense of robustness and prevalence of each category.

When analyzing the survey data, we deleted participants who left the last question blank. However, we retained participants who responded "none," "N/A," and "I don't know" as these responses may indicate that these students simply did not have a

concern that they wished to discuss at that time in their lives. This resulted in 280 participants with 472 responses for analyses. Next, the first author used open coding to code all responses and then grouped them as axial codes, and the second author examined the axial codes (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Disagreement was discussed until consistency was reached. For example, we grouped two open codes (i.e., friends, peers) into an axial code and we named this axial code as "peer relationship." This axial code represented 25 responses (see Table 3).

Moreover, we presented the frequency of responses for students with different genders and ages but only distinguished responses from international students with those from domestic students, not with students from different cultural backgrounds. We did this because we noticed that the variable, cultural backgrounds, was confounded with the geographic residency information students provided (e.g., Asians who lived outside the United States categorized as international students vs. Asians who lived in the United States categorized as domestic students). However, we were able to distinguish the Native American students from three tribes (i.e., Diné, Ojibwe, Lakota) and discussed their responses in detail.

Results and Discussion

Content analysis yielded three main categories of responses (see Table 3). The first three major categories, *feelings and emotions, future aspirations*, and *relationships*, received about half of the responses, with some differences existing among subgroups including gender, age, and whether the students were domestic or international. In addition, special concerns about bullying existed among some Diné students, and other exceptions found in the data were categorized and reported as minor categories of *additional learning*. Table 4 includes content analysis results of the major and minor categories identified in the data.

Three Primary and Other Concerns of All Students

Of the 280 participants who answered the question "something you wish you could discuss with a caring adult sometime," 218 participants provided 410 responses regarding a particular concern. Fifty-four participants answered "none" or "N/A" and six answered "I don't know." In addition, two students expressed that they did not want to discuss any social-affective concerns with an adult. These 62 responses were included in our analyses and are discussed separately. Analyses of the 410 responses showed that these high-ability adolescents would like to discuss three social and affective topics with a caring adult. First, *feelings and emotions* ($n = 71$) emerged as the most robust category with the most comments. This category included four subcategories: Stress ($n = 12$), Fear ($n = 11$), Worry ($n = 7$), and Other Emotions ($n = 41$). The second category was *future aspirations* ($n = 63$), which included three related subcategories: Future ($n = 38$), College ($n = 19$), and Career ($n = 6$) that detailed their concerns about their futures. Third, students wanted to discuss *relationships* ($n = 57$), with students specifying Peer Relationships ($n = 25$), General Relationships ($n = 14$), Boys

Table 3. Three Main Concerns That Contemporary Adolescents Would Like to Discuss With a Caring Adult.

Categories	Axial codes	Responses supporting the axial codes	Responses to each concern from different groups N = 280; RN = 472					Total number of responses to each concern
			Gender		Age			
			Male N = 151 RN = 249	Female N = 129 RN = 223	5th to 6th grade N = 133 RN = 227	7th to 8th grade N = 73 RN = 122	9th to 12th grade N = 74 RN = 123	
Feelings and emotions	Stress	12	35 (14.06%)	36 (16.14%)	48 (21.15%)	12 (9.83%)	11 (8.94%)	71 (15.04%)
	Fear	11						
	Worry	7						
	Other emotions (e.g., angry, homesickness, sad)	41						
Future aspirations	Future	38	29 (11.65%)	34 (15.25%)	13 (5.73%)	24 (19.67%)	26 (21.17%)	63 (13.35%)
	College	19						
	Careers	6						
Relationships	Peer relationship	25	27 (10.84%)	30 (13.45%)	29 (12.78%)	13 (10.66%)	15 (12.20%)	57 (12.08%)
	General relationship	14						
	Boys/girls	10						
	Social relationship	8						
Nothing	Nothing; I don't know	60	40 (16.06%)	20 (8.97%)	22 (9.69%)	23 (18.85%)	15 (12.20%)	60 (12.71%)

Note. N represents the number of student participants who provided responses to the survey question. RN represents the number of responses provided by the student participants. The percentages in the parentheses represent the response rates of each subgroup based on the categories.

Table 4. Other Concerns That Contemporary Adolescents Would Like to Discuss With a Caring Adult.

| Categories | Axial codes | Responses supporting the axial codes | Responses to each concern from different groups N = 280; RN = 472 | | | | | | Total number of responses to each concern |
| | | | Gender | | Age | | | | |
			Male N = 151 RN = 249	Female N = 129 RN = 223	5th to 6th grade N = 133 RN = 227	7th to 8th grade N = 73 RN = 122	9th to 12th grade N = 74 RN = 123		
Other concerns	Personalized concerns	25	11 (4.41%)	14 (6.28%)	14 (6.17%)	7 (5.74%)	4 (3.30%)		25 (5.30%)
	School	21	9 (3.61 %)	12 (5.38%)	13 (5.72%)	8 (6.55%)	0 (0%)		21 (4.45%)
	Bullying	18	11 (4.42%)	7 (3.14%)	14 (5.72%)	4 (3.28%)	0 (0%)		18 (3.81%)
	Family	17	8 (3.21%)	9 (4.04%)	9 (3.96%)	4 (3.28%)	4 (3.25%)		17 (3.60%)
	Social issues	16	9 (3.61%)	7 (3.14%)	6 (2.64%)	2 (1.64%)	8 (6.50%)		16 (3.39%)
	Life	13	8 (3.21%)	5 (2.24%)	4 (1.76%)	6 (4.92%)	3 (2.44%)		13 (2.75%)
	Growing-up issues	9	9 (3.61%)	0 (0%)	4 (1.76%)	3 (2.46%)	2 (1.63%)		9 (1.91%)
	Hobbies	8	4 (1.61%)	4 (1.79%)	6 (2.64%)	2 (1.64%)	0 (0%)		8 (1.69%)
	Advice	8	4 (1.61%)	4 (1.79%)	2 (0.88%)	2 (1.64%)	4 (3.25%)		8 (1.69%)
	Confidence	5	4 (1.61%)	1 (0.4%)	5 (2.20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)		5 (1.06%)
	Culture	5	3 (1.20%)	2 (0.9%)	2 (0.88%)	0 (0%)	3 (2.44%)		5 (1.06%)

Note. N represents the number of student participants who provided responses to the survey question. RN represents the number of responses provided by the student participants. The percentages in the parentheses represent the response rates of each subgroup based on the categories.

49

and Girls (*n* = 10), and Social Relationships (*n* = 8) as their areas of interest for discussion. Details of the axial codes and frequency counts of each category are detailed in Table 3. The results support previous studies that the social and affective concerns of high-ability adolescents were related to relationships and career planning (Peterson, 2000; Wood, 2010; Yoo & Moon, 2006). Moreover, the results extend these findings to students who come from the Navajo Nation, two Ojibwe reservations, and one Lakota reservation as well as to some students who come from outside the United States.

These three major categories were robust across all students, but nuanced differences existed in additional categories by gender, age, and whether students were from the United States or an international school, and among Diné subgroups. Furthermore, although these three categories of the concerns covered 46.59% the responses, the other responses could be categorized into topics including personalized concerns (*n* = 25), school (*n* = 21), bullying (*n* = 18), family (*n* = 17), social issues (*n* = 16), life (*n* = 13), growing-up issues (*n* = 9), hobbies (*n* = 8), advice (*n* = 8), failure (*n* = 8), confidence (*n* = 5), and culture (*n* = 5; see Table 4).

Gender

The overall response rate of boys was lower than that of girls in this study regardless of their age (see Table 1). Among those who completed the survey, 40 boys (16.09%) said that they did not know or answered "none," whereas only 20 girls (8.97%) gave these responses. Thus, boys either had fewer social and affective concerns than did girls, or they did not want to talk with a caring adult about these concerns.

Boys and girls had similar response rates in the three main categories, *feelings and emotions, future aspirations*, and *relationships*. However, within the other subtopics, we found gender differences in "growing-up issues." Eight high-ability boys mentioned that they would like to discuss puberty and maturity with a caring adult, but only one girl expressed concern about physical change, thus, the challenges of puberty among high-ability youth may affect boys more frequently than girls. According to Kerr and Cohn (2001), boys want to know how it feels to be a man, and they want to make the passage into manhood without feeling alienated.

Age

Categorical differences existed among students in early adolescence ages 10 to 12, middle adolescence ages 13 to 14, and late adolescence ages 15 to 18 in their responses to the three major categories, and additional concerns existed for early adolescents concerning confidence.

The category that early adolescents most frequently wanted to discuss with a caring adult was *feelings and emotions*. Early adolescents provided four times the responses (*n* = 48) as did middle adolescents (*n* = 12) and as late adolescents (*n* = 11) in the category *feelings and emotions*. The category that middle and late adolescents most frequently wanted to discuss with a caring adult was *future aspirations*, late adolescents

provided 26 responses in the category *future aspirations*, middle adolescents provided 24 responses, and early adolescents only provided 13 responses. These findings reflect that in early adolescence, learning "how I feel," and using expressive vocabulary to articulate it could be viewed as early steps for developing social and affective well-being and are important for building positive future relationships (Peterson, 2008; Peterson, Betts, & Bradley, 2009). Likewise, more middle adolescents and late adolescents wanted to discuss *future aspirations* with a caring adult than did early adolescents. This demonstrated that concerns about the future seemed to increase age. This finding supports previous findings of Yoo and Moon (2006) who noted that high-ability adolescents had a need for career planning. Thus, high-ability adolescents may need differentiated future planning guidance based on different stages of adolescence as well as their gifted characteristics.

Five early adolescents mentioned confidence (e.g., "How I lack self-confidence") but none of the older participants mentioned confidence as a concern. The age trend of confidence as a concern of early adolescents needs further investigation because the development of self-confidence may be related to other concepts (e.g., self-concept, self-esteem; Broderick & Blewitt, 2010).

International and Cultural Diversity Students

One interesting finding was that although we inquired about adolescents' social and affective concerns that they want to discuss with a caring adult in the survey, four international students and one Diné student mentioned that they wanted to discuss culture. As one 6th-grade international student articulated, "I want to talk about our county's [*sic*] culture. Because we had came [*sic*] from different country and have different culture. But they doesn't [*sic*] understand."

Domestically, U.S. students may not consider culture as a social and affective concern, but for those students from other countries, cultural differences may be more apparent. It is possible that international students are more sensitive to culture-related topics than domestic students, especially when they are spending time in a country other than their home country, but further investigation is needed. Moreover, the topic of culture warrants further investigation because the definitions of giftedness vary from culture to culture (e.g., Peterson, 1999). Other scholars also found when high-ability students from culturally diverse backgrounds built their own identity, their own cultural value and their academic identity interacted with and influenced their development (Hébert, 2011; Kitano, 2012; Worrell, 2012). We suggest that high-ability students from different cultural backgrounds need to discuss cultural issues and explore cultural diversity. It is also important to provide high-ability adolescents an opportunity to discuss racial and gender stereotypes and inequalities caused by cultural biases (Reis & Renzulli, 2004).

Native American Students From Three Tribes

Among the 69 Native American students, 68 high-ability Diné (*n* = 46), Ojibwe (*n* = 11), and Lakota (*n* = 11) students received scholarships and completed the survey with

124 responses. Regarding age and gender, 41 were early adolescents, 20 were middle adolescents, and seven were late adolescents, and 43 were girls and 25 were boys. Considering the special contexts and cultures these students came from and to respond to the call from Gentry et al. (2014), we analyzed the responses by different tribal affiliations. Among them, 46 Diné students came from two communities on the Navajo Nation, 11 Ojibwe students came from one reservation, and 11 Lakota students came from one reservation. When examining the responses of high-ability Diné, Ojibwe, and Lakota students, we found three trends: *feelings and emotions, future aspirations*, and *relationships*, which were similar to the categories that emerged from the other cultural groups. The finding of the similar categorical trends is important. Although poverty, different cultural values, and living in a rural area may influence the mind-set of high-ability Native American students (Gentry et al., 2014), like their high-ability peers from across the country and world, they reported similar concerns that they wanted to discuss with a caring adult.

Although these three Native American groups expressed similar concerns, Diné students expressed additional concerns beyond the general findings. When comparing the 80 responses of these 46 Diné students to those of the students from other cultural groups (i.e., Asian, African American, Hispanic, White, Ojibwe, and Lakota), we found that Diné students expressed that they wanted to discuss topics related to personal issues, including personalized concerns ($n = 6$) and family ($n = 4$). We do not know what personal and family issues these Diné students would like to discuss with a caring adult because they simply responded with key words rather than detailed elaboration. However, literature indicated that students from disadvantaged backgrounds and/or places where cultural differences existed between family and school are often more concerned about family issues. For example, Gentry et al. (2014) found inconsistency between previous assumptions of culture and community of the Diné, Ojibwe, and Lakota communities and their current practices. Moreover, the findings support the call that there is a need for more research on the Native American high-ability students, and researchers should categorize them based on their tribal affiliations rather than ethnicity (Gentry et al., 2014). When we searched the studies related to the Native American high-ability students in different tribes, only a handful of studies exist and many are out of date.

Bullying as a Special Concern

Eighteen participants reported that they wanted to discuss bullying with a caring adult, and 12 of them were early adolescents, six were middle adolescents, but none were late adolescents. These findings support previous research that Grade 6 students witnessed the highest prevalence of bullying (Peterson & Ray, 2006b). That these high-ability early adolescents want to discuss bullying with a caring adult also aligns with the finding that bullying is an issue in the high-ability population as well as in the regular population (Hoover, Oliver, & Hazler, 1992; Peters & Bain, 2011; Peterson & Ray, 2006a, 2006b). High-ability early adolescents in this study expressed that they want to discuss bullying with a caring adult even after they have had an opportunity to discuss

it in the affective curriculum in the residential program, which suggests that bullying is a topic that requires more attention.

When comparing the responses from international and domestic students, we found that 13 domestic students directly used the word "bullying" but none of the international Asian students used the word and only two international Hispanic students reported concerns of bullying. This does not indicate that bullying exists only in the United States. Instead, the word "bullying" is widely known and used in the United States with its own cultural meaning. It is possible that international Asian students are not familiar with the terminology "bullying."

In the Diné subgroup, six students mentioned bullying as a concern they wanted to discuss with a caring adult. Although 34 of the 46 Diné students in this study were early adolescents, which may influence the result, the percentage of reported "bullying" in the Diné subgroup (17.64%) was still greater than the percentage of that in the early adolescents (9.02%) in this study. This may reflect an issue in their particular community. Previous researchers reported that bullying was common among Native American populations (Bell et al., 2014). Carlyle and Steinman (2007) reported that Native American youth are more frequently reported as being a victim or perpetrator of bullying than White, African American, Hispanic, and Asian students. We found that bullying was a concern especially for some Diné students. Six early adolescents in the Diné subgroup all came from one reservation community, which may indicate a particular issue in their community that requires local attention.

Other Findings From Those Who Answered "None"

Sixty participants (21%) provided responses of "none" (54) and "I don't know" (6) for the last open-ended question, "something you wish you could discuss with a caring adult sometime." In addition, one Lakota student stated, "My personal issues that I don't want anyone to know about" and another Hispanic student wrote, "I don't like to talk to adults [about] personal things." These responses indicated that some high-ability adolescents may not have particular concerns in their life, or they do not know how to express their concerns, or they are reluctant to express their concerns. It is not surprising because adolescents may not seek help from others, as they consider telling someone their problems as an outlet for feelings but not as a solution to problems (Peterson & Ray, 2006a).

Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, participants in this study came from only one university-based summer residential program. Olszewski-Kubilius (2003) claimed that one general issue with special summer programs was that the variety of instructional models and program types of these university-based summer programs have transformed each program into its own unique set of gifted education services. Thus, the students in this study are not representative of students attending other summer programs across the United States. Second, our study was based on one survey

question of "something you wish you could discuss with a caring adult sometime." Responses to this question may not represent all their concerns, rather only those they would be willing to discuss with an adult. In addition, the word *concern* was used for reporting results of something participants would like to discuss with a caring adult, but readers should be cautious in interpreting some of the responses as concerns that bothered these participants. Third, information other than age, gender, and ethnicity of the participants was not available. Other variables may influence the concerns of these high-ability adolescents, including but not limited to parental educational level and socioeconomic status. Fourth, a larger sample of participants from Ojibwe and Lakota tribes might yield different results. In addition, considering the special context and culture of these reservations, the findings of the high-ability Diné students can be viewed as a first step to understand this group only, and the results should not be generalized to students from other Native American tribes. Last, relating to the fourth limitation, we attempted to cite studies that did not generalize all Native American students into one general group; however, many authors make this generalization. The literature often reflects a general lack of understanding of the nuances in specific Native American tribes. We differentiated among Diné, Ojibwe, and Lakota students in this study and intend that our differentiation concerning tribal affiliations serves as a guideline for future social and affective research on high-ability Native American students.

Implications for Practitioners

Despite limitations, the findings from this study may provide researchers and educators in the gifted education field with some new perspectives. First, the results support the assumption that differences in gender and age may result in different social and affective concerns among high-ability adolescents (e.g., Peterson et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2002). Finding nuanced differences among gender and age, we suggest that when designing an intervention or counseling program, educators pay attention to topics based on age and gender (e.g., Mofield & Chakraborti-Ghosh, 2010).

Second, we noticed that the personalized concerns of some high-ability students may indicate that varied affective services are needed (Jen, 2014; Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002; Peterson et al., 2015). Although we did not have detailed information about these issues, previous literature revealed that sometimes these personalized concerns can be sensitive issues. Thus, some high-ability students may need to receive individual counseling although traditionally, high-ability students are not the focus of school counseling (Peterson, 2007). Individual counseling is professional and should be conducted carefully (Erford, 2010), but researchers and educators in the field of gifted education without professional counseling training may have limited access to conduct personalized counseling. Therefore, we suggest that more collaboration between gifted educators and school counselors is needed.

Third, we noticed that educators use terms, such as bullying, self-esteem, and self-concept, frequently when they refer to social and affective development. When

adults discuss these concepts with adolescents, even if the adolescents are cognitively competent, they still need explanations to understand these terms. Thus, we suggest that when discussing social and affective topics with high-ability adolescents, group leaders or educators should ensure that they use plain words in the group discussion or provide explanations so that these students can understand the psychological terms.

Finally, our findings indicate that the high-ability adolescents in this study seem concerned about developmental challenges regardless of their age, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Thus, we suggest that educators and researchers proactively address affective concerns of high-ability students, focusing on cultivating healthy social and affective development. Moreover, for high-ability students from disadvantaged backgrounds, educators can adapt a strength-based approach, which focuses on students' personal strengths and their potential development. When counseling these students, school professionals can take a resilience-based perspective to increase protective factors (Hébert, 2011; Jen, 2014), including encouraging them to develop positive belief in self, creating a personal support system, and participating in special programs that will enhance their psychological well-being.

Appendix

Summer Residential Affective Curriculum Feedback Form

1. The most memorable topics discussed in your groups.
2. Topics you'd recommend (not discussed this year) for future group discussions.
3. What you might think more about in the future—because of discussions in your groups?
4. Your opinion about including attention to social/emotional development in summer campus programs.
5. How comfortable you were when talking about social/emotional development in the group?
6. Something you wish you could discuss with a caring adult sometime.

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