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Counseling Needs of Gifted Students: An Analysis of Intake Forms at a University- Based Counseling Center

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate perceptions of the counseling needs of gifted children from the perspective of parents who sought help from a fee-based counseling center for gifted students. The counseling center provided assessment and educational and career guidance, as well as family social/emotional counseling, all of which were differentiated to meet the needs of gifted children ages 4–18. Participating parents completed intake forms that included a 47-item client problem inventory and were designed to assist the counseling process. One hundred and twenty of these problem inventories were analyzed to determine which counseling needs led parents to bring their children for counseling services and whether there were any differences in perceived needs among three different developmental levels of children (preschool, preadolescent, and adolescent). Results suggested that age had a statistically and practically significant effect on parent perceptions of career and child (psychosocial) concerns and a practically significant effect on school, family, and peer concerns. For all age groups, parents perceived their child's greatest counseling need to be educational planning, followed closely by school concerns. Psychosocial concerns were also salient for parents of children older than 6. Career planning was important for parents of children older than 12. Peer and family concerns were less salient than the other categories of concern. The study suggests that gifted children do have unique needs for differentiated counseling services and that counseling services for gifted children should emphasize educational planning and be targeted to the needs of specific developmental levels.

“Giftedness” can be a double-edged sword. Being different is often devalued as a “liability” or a “burden,” especially among peers, while giftedness is appreciated as an “asset,” especially among adults (Robinson, 1997). There has been a great deal of attention paid to the asset side of giftedness in the field of gifted education, but, until recently, there has been comparatively little interest in the burden side: that is, how to help gifted children and adolescents cope with the stress created by being different. Similarly, there is much less research on how to meet socio-emotional needs of the gifted through differ-

PUTTING THE RESEARCH TO USE

This study is one of the first empirical investigations of the types of concerns that lead parents of gifted children to seek specialized counseling services. The study suggests that specialized counseling services are needed for gifted children and that the services provided need to be adjusted for the developmental level of the child. Parents can use this study to see the kinds of concerns that led parents of children near one Midwestern counseling center to seek specialized counseling services and to advocate for training in giftedness for counselors in their areas. Counselors can use this study for guidance on the types of services to provide at different age levels and to better understand the extent to which the concerns parents have about their gifted children relate to educational planning and schooling. The findings can also help counseling professionals differentiate their services for the gifted population. Teachers and administrators can use this study to support recommendations for differentiated educational services for gifted students and to further their work with parents of gifted children.

entiated counseling than there is on how to meet the academic needs of the gifted through differentiated curriculum (Moon, Kelly, & Feldhusen, 1997; Robinson, Reis, Neihart, & Moon, 2002).

Although the gifted are a diverse group, they seem to share some common characteristics. Studies suggest that gifted students may have various personality characteristics, such as perfectionism, excitability, sensitivity, intensity, a desire for recognition of academic achievement, nonconformity, questioning of rules or authority, a strong sense of justice, and idealism (Lovecky, 1993; Silverman, 1993b; Sowa, McIntire, May, & Bland, 1994; VanTassel-Baska, 1998). These personality characteristics may create difficult situations in traditional school settings, resulting in the gifted being detached, feeling isolated from their less gifted peers, or having difficulty with self-regulation (Lovecky). Accordingly, gifted students may develop unique socio-emotional needs and benefit from differentiated counseling that addresses those needs (Robinson et al., 2002).

After an extensive review of the literature on gifted students' specialized counseling needs, Moon et al. (1997) conducted a needs assessment to aid in the development of a university-based counseling center for gifted students and their families. A survey was designed and mailed to a regional sample of parents, school personnel, community counselors, and professors. All groups of respondents believed that special counseling needs existed for gifted students and their families with regard to educational planning, career choices, school/peer relationships, family relationships, and socio-emotional problems and that services and trained personnel were inadequate to meet those needs.

A review of the literature also suggested that there might be a distinctive pattern in the counseling needs of gifted students throughout their chronological development. Gifted preschoolers may flourish within their families, but they may lose their interest for learning and even fall into underachievement upon entering school (Robinson et al., 2002). Finally, the extensive review of the literature conducted by Robinson et al. suggested that most of the social/emotional concerns of gifted children and adolescents have their roots in school environments that are not adapted to their unique learning needs.

The purpose of this study was to examine the counseling needs of gifted students who were actually brought by their parents to a university-based counseling center. The following research questions were investigated:

1. What counseling needs did parents indicate for their children and/or family on a structured intake proto-

col at a university-based counseling center for gifted students?

2. Did these counseling needs vary by age?

Review of the Literature

The counseling needs of gifted students are reviewed by the chronological age. Specifically, there were three age groups of interest: preschooler, preadolescents, and adolescents.

Preschooler

Research suggests that a distinguishing trait of gifted children in the preschool years is precocious language acquisition (Bland, Sowa, & Callahan, 1994; Hollingworth, 1942). Studies have found that gifted preschoolers demonstrate greater self-awareness (Jacobs, 1971), and are more socially advanced (Dalzell, 1998) than their peers. They have also been found to have cooperative play patterns (Barnett & Fiscella, 1985; Lupkowski, 1989), to select older playmates, and to seek the companionship of adults (Freeman, 1994). Taken together these suggest that giftedness both promotes social/emotional adjustment and creates differences from peers that can create social/emotional problems in the preschool years.

Preadolescence

Two important tasks, academic achievement and positive peer relationships, can begin to conflict with each other in this school-age period. Some gifted preadolescents may adopt ego-defense mechanisms such as "hiding behind a façade of scholarship" (Freeman, 1994), while others may fall into underachievement (Robinson et al., 2002). These challenges of preadolescence become more complex during adolescence (Dalzell, 1998).

For this age group, there has not been much research, and results of empirical studies are not consistent. In an interview study, gifted preadolescents indicated that they could be hurt by classmates who teased them for being smart, were confused by their abilities, were distressed by high expectations of self and others, and were bored and distracted most of the time in school (Ford, 1989). This study suggested that these gifted youngsters needed specialized counseling services that could provide them with better understanding of themselves and help them cope with their stressors.

In contrast, a study by Ludwig and Cullinan (1984) reported that gifted elementary students had fewer behavior problems than their less gifted peers. In general, the literature on this age group suggests that they are as well or better adjusted than their age-level peers but may suffer social/emotional distress when placed in inappropriate school environments (Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002).

Adolescence

There have been two conflicting views on the psychological well-being of gifted adolescents. The first view is that gifted individuals are better adjusted than the less gifted, due to cognitive capacities such as adaptive thinking skills, which enable them to cope with stressors better (Baker, 1995; Beer, 1991; Scholwinski & Reynolds, 1985). The other view is that gifted adolescents are more vulnerable and face greater risk for socio-emotional problems (Gallucci, 1989; Grossberg & Cornell, 1988), and may opt for underachievement to gain peer acceptance (Clasen & Clasen, 1995).

Several empirical studies have supported the first view. Academically gifted adolescents had fewer emotional problems or maladjustments (Gallucci, 1988; Nail & Evans, 1997; Parker, 1996; Reynolds & Bradley, 1983) and higher self-confidence (Ablard, 1997; Chan, 1988) than less gifted adolescents.

At the same time, there are also studies that support the second view. For example, in one study gifted adolescents had significantly higher anxiety scores (Tong & Yewchuk, 1996). In another, academically gifted adolescents scored higher on a perfectionism quiz (Orange, 1997) than their less gifted peers. Some studies have noted the association of giftedness with eating disorders (Dally & Gomez, 1979; Garner, 1991; Rowland, 1970). In line with this second view, another study indicated that gifted adolescents might have been "exaggerating their similarities" to their nongifted peers "in an effort to integrate socially into school" (Cross, Coleman, & Stewart, 1995, p. 185).

Interestingly, some other studies reported that there were no differences between gifted adolescents and their less gifted peers. Gifted adolescents had similar self-concepts (Hoge & McSheffrey, 1991; Tong & Yewchuk, 1996), had no different rates of depression (Neihart, 1991), and did not experience more distress or maladjustment than their less gifted peers (Baker, 1995; LoCicero & Ashby, 2000).

Summary

In summary, there is currently no consensus about the counseling needs of gifted students at any level and this is especially true for adolescents. The purpose of this study was to investigate the types of concerns that might lead parents of gifted children to seek assistance from a counseling center that specialized in working with gifted students.

Method

Introduction

This study used a causal-comparative (ex post facto) design to examine the counseling needs of gifted students. Data were obtained from intake forms that were completed by clients of a university-based counseling center for gifted students and their families in the Midwestern United States. The counseling center provided three types of services: assessment of giftedness coupled with educational planning, career counseling, and family counseling for gifted children with social, emotional, or family issues. The intake form was used by counseling center staff to make recommendations to parents about the services that were deemed most appropriate for their child.

Participants

Parents or extended family members of the child (or children) completed an Intake Information Form on their first visit. Not all the participants of this study had been formally identified as gifted. However, all of the children were perceived to be exhibiting gifted behaviors by their parents.

There were 35 intake forms completed in 1997, 40 forms in 1998, 35 forms in 1999, and 10 forms in 2000, which made a total of 120. The intake form included a demographic section. Information from this section yielded considerable information about the participants. Sixty-six (66%) of the children were male and 34 (34%) were female. Ninety-five percent of the parents were Caucasian. A majority of the parents (62% of the fathers and 71% of the mothers) had earned at least baccalaureate degree. About 20% of the parents only completed high school. Only 1% of the parents did not have high school degree. Half of the families (53%) reported that their household income was more than \$50,000 per year.

To be more specific, a quarter of the families reported more than \$75,000 as their household income. Forty percent of the families indicated that their household income was between \$20,000 and \$50,000, and less than 10% of the families (8%) earned less than \$20,000.

Instruments

In addition to demographic information, the intake form included a family talent identification form, a client problem inventory, and an open-ended form where parents could indicate their goals for the counseling process. This intake form was developed by the faculty directors of the center as a screening and referral instrument after a thorough review of the literature on counseling needs of gifted students. This study explored parent responses to the client problem inventory portion of the intake form. The client problem inventory had 47 items, divided into six categories: Educational Planning (3 items), Career Concerns (1 item), School Concerns (11 items), Peer Concerns (6 items), Family Concerns (8 items), and Child Concerns (18 items). For example, "Child's isolation from peers/loneliness/rejection" and "Child's poor social skills" were Peer Concern items. Items such as "Child's boredom or lack of academic challenge" or "Child's failure to work up to potential" were categorized as School Concerns. The respondent was asked to reply to all the items, leaving none blank. All the response scales ranged from 0, *not at all*, to 4, *very much*. Means and standard deviations for the three age groups on all items of the full questionnaire are presented in Table 1.

Variables

In this study, there was one independent variable, age. There were three age groups: Group 1, Age < 6 (Preschoolers and kindergartners); Group 2, Age 6–12 (Preadolescents); and Group 3, Age >12 (Adolescents). Though the age variable is continuous by nature, it was categorized according to the approximate school stages for research purposes, because the effects of the three school stages associated with the chronological development of gifted students on their counseling needs were of interest in this study.

Dependent variables were perceived counseling needs of the clients, as measured by the intake form. Specifically, the dependent variables were the six separate subscores for each category on the original instrument: Educational Planning, Career Concerns, School Concerns, Peer Concerns, Family Concerns, and Child Concerns.

Data Analysis

Cronbach's coefficient alphas were calculated to determine the problem inventory's internal consistency for the whole scale and for the subscales. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for all the 47 items was .94 (see Table 2). After Cronbach's coefficient alphas of the subscales were calculated, less reliable items were left out of further analyses. The following statements reflect the deletion of less reliable items.

The highest coefficient among the subscales (.92) was that of the Child Concerns subscale (15 items). On this subscale, Item 34 (C34), "Reaction to recent loss/grief," Item 35 (C35), "Involvement in too many activities," and Item 43 (C43), "Difficulty coping with LD in addition to high ability" lowered the coefficient and were left out. The coefficients of other subscales were: .84 for School Concerns (9 items), .81 for Peer Concerns (5 items), and .78 for Family Concerns (7 items). Among the items on the School Concerns subscale, "Transfer to a new school" (S5) and "Fear of going to school" (S14) were less reliable and thus were not included in the later analyses. The same was true for "Undesirable friends" (P19) from the Peer Concerns section, "Birth/adoptions of younger siblings" (F29) from the Family Concerns section, and "College attendance selection" (E3) in Educational Planning. The coefficient of Educational Planning (.48) was the lowest of all of the subscales, partly because this subscale had only two items. Overall, the coefficients were quite high across all of the subscales. The internal consistency of this problem inventory was determined to be fairly strong.

Intercorrelations of the subscales were calculated, as well (see Table 2). The School Concerns, Peer Concerns, Family Concerns, and Child Concerns subscales were highly intercorrelated, with coefficients ranging from .41 to .68. Educational Planning and Career Concerns did not seem to correlate highly with the other subscales, the correlation coefficients of which ranged from .04 to .31. However, Educational Planning and School Concerns, Educational Planning and Peer Concerns, and Career Concerns and Child Concerns had statistically significant correlations.

For the inferential analyses, composite scores were computed for each dependent variable after deleting less reliable items based on the internal consistency analysis. One-way ANOVAs with age as the independent variable and six counseling need subscores as corresponding dependent variables were done with $\alpha = .017$ to determine whether there were statistically significant differ-

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Inventory Items by Age

Variable	Age < 6 (1) <i>n</i> = 27		Age 6–12 (2) <i>n</i> = 64		Age > 12 (3) <i>n</i> = 23	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Educational Planning</i>						
E1: Grade acceleration	1.89	1.67	1.55	1.51	1.30	1.66
E2: Educational planning	2.67	1.59	2.83	1.46	2.78	1.62
E3: College attendance selection	0.52	0.75	0.34	0.86	2.48	1.70
<i>Career Concerns</i>						
C4: Career and life planning	0.50	0.76	0.75	1.19	2.78	1.51
<i>School Concerns</i>						
S5: Transfer to a new school	1.49	1.49	1.21	1.67	0.61	1.31
S6: Talent program (or lack of)	2.48	1.67	2.70	1.42	2.30	1.58
S7: Acceleration	2.15	1.59	2.16	1.48	1.55	1.74
S8: Boredom	2.33	1.71	2.89	1.46	2.52	1.68
S9: Inattentiveness	0.96	1.31	1.83	1.60	1.65	1.70
S10: Failure to work up to potential	0.81	1.27	2.10	1.56	1.96	1.94
S11: Lack of motivation	0.44	1.01	1.20	1.54	1.64	1.73
S12: Disorganization/forgetfulness	0.52	0.94	1.77	1.66	1.70	1.77
S13: Failure to follow school rules	0.33	0.78	0.78	1.31	1.00	1.51
S14: Fear of going to school	0.37	0.74	0.25	0.84	0.13	0.46
S15: Conflict with teachers	0.48	1.05	0.78	1.19	1.04	1.58
<i>Peer Concerns</i>						
P16: Arguing/fighting with peers	0.59	1.05	0.89	1.25	0.57	1.27
P17: Being bullied by peers	0.85	1.29	0.83	1.19	0.83	1.56
P18: Isolation from peers/loneliness	0.74	1.23	1.17	1.39	1.61	1.70
P19: Undesirable friends	0.33	0.83	0.25	0.59	0.57	1.08
P20: Belief that s/he must act dumb	0.52	1.12	0.41	0.71	0.78	1.17
P21: Poor social skills	0.48	0.98	1.17	1.46	1.52	1.65
<i>Family Concerns</i>						
F22: Poor communication skills	0.30	0.61	1.10	1.31	1.17	1.03
F23: Parenting/discipline	1.30	1.27	1.50	1.41	1.52	1.38
F24: Sibling conflict	0.41	0.69	1.05	1.26	1.45	1.47
F25: Transition to adolescence	0.33	1.00	0.79	1.26	1.39	1.56
F26: Financial stress	0.85	0.95	0.89	1.23	1.04	1.43
F27: Marital stress	0.63	0.97	0.53	0.99	0.48	1.16
F28: Effects of divorce	0.26	0.86	0.32	0.95	0.48	1.27
F29: Birth/adoption	0.22	0.58	0.35	0.97	0.00	0.00
<i>Child Concerns</i>						
C30: Pressure to meet expectations	1.11	1.37	1.95	1.46	2.09	1.47
C31: Perfectionism	1.26	1.23	1.64	1.52	2.00	1.65
C32: Overconforming to rules	0.67	1.18	1.52	1.46	1.09	1.51
C33: Moodiness	0.59	1.08	1.63	1.52	1.96	1.58
C34: Reaction to recent loss/grief	0.07	0.27	0.47	0.93	1.09	1.56
C35: Involvement in too many	0.22	0.58	0.41	0.82	0.73	1.16
C36: Irritability	0.48	0.89	1.48	1.39	1.95	1.62

Variable	Age < 6 (1) <i>n</i> = 27		Age 6–12 (2) <i>n</i> = 64		Age > 12 (3) <i>n</i> = 23	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Child Concerns</i>						
C37: Hypersensitivity	0.89	1.28	1.53	1.45	1.82	1.47
C38: Anxiety/fearfulness	0.63	0.93	1.19	1.41	1.59	1.56
C39: Anger/frustration	0.85	1.20	1.78	1.47	2.36	1.59
C40: Noncompliance	0.96	1.43	1.31	1.45	1.39	1.41
C41: Sense of being different	0.52	1.12	1.27	1.46	2.00	1.62
C42: Low self-esteem	0.37	0.97	1.30	1.47	1.57	1.59
C43: Difficulty coping with LD	0.00	0.00	0.29	0.95	0.70	1.55
C44: Difficulty coping with AD/HD	0.00	0.00	0.67	1.29	0.68	1.49
C45: Physical problems	0.19	0.62	0.58	1.05	1.39	1.67
C46: Sadness/depression	0.04	0.19	0.80	1.24	1.65	1.80
C47: Suicidal ideations	0.00	0.00	0.36	0.93	0.70	0.97

Table 2

*Internal Consistencies of the Entire Scale
and Subscales After Deleting Less Reliable Items and Intercorrelations Among the Subscales*

Dependent Variables	Alpha	Number of items	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Whole Scale	.94	47						
1. Educational Planning	.48	2	—	.17	.31*	.25*	.04	.08
2. Career Concerns				—	.10	.12	.12	.26*
3. School Concerns	.84	9			—	.55*	.41*	.57*
4. Peer Concerns	.81	5				—	.45*	.63*
5. Family Concerns	.78	7					—	.68*
6. Child Concerns	.92	15						—

Note. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha for Career Concerns could not be calculated, as it had only one item.

**p* < .01, two-tailed.

ences among the three age groups. The alpha level (.017) was corrected using the Bonferroni familywise procedure (Keppel, 1991). Tukey pairwise comparisons were used for a post-hoc analysis, as this procedure conducts all pairwise comparisons with a critical value regardless of the number of the means in the group, and has a Type I error rate for all pairwise comparisons (Montgomery, 1997). In addition, effect sizes were reported in order to assist in assessing the practical significance of the results.

Findings

Descriptive Analyses

The descriptive analyses were aimed at establishing a general overview of the data. Means and standard devia-

tions of the inventory items are reported below. Means and standard deviations of all items are listed according to the three age groups (see Table 1). Parents of gifted students of all ages indicated boredom (S8), educational planning (E2), and talent development program (or lack thereof; S6) as being the highest counseling needs. The highest perceived counseling need of all the items was boredom (S8) among gifted preadolescents (Age Group 2; *M* = 2.89; *SD* = 1.46). Gifted adolescents (Age Group 3) were perceived to have high counseling needs for career planning (C4; *M* = 2.78; *SD* = 1.51), but no counseling needs for issues related to the birth/adoption of younger siblings (F29; *M* = 0.00; *SD* = 0.00). Gifted preschoolers (Age Group 1) were perceived to have no counseling needs related to learning disabilities (C43) or AD/HD (C44), probably because few children are diagnosed with these disorders prior to school. Suicidal ideations (C47) were also not a concern for this age group.

Table 3

Mean, Standard Deviations, and Tukey Post Hoc Tests for Three Age Groups and Six Dependent Variables

Variable	Age < 6 (1) <i>n</i> = 27		6 ≤ Age ≤ 12 (2) <i>n</i> = 64		Age > 12 (3) <i>n</i> = 23		Post hoc
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Ed. Planning	2.28	.25	2.19	.16	2.04	.27	1 = 2 = 3
Career Concerns	.50	.23	.75	.15	2.78	.25	1, 2 < 3
School Concerns	1.17	.19	1.80	.12	1.73	.21	1 = 2 = 3
Peer Concerns	.64	.19	.89	.12	1.06	.20	1 = 2 = 3
Family Concerns	.58	.15	.88	.10	1.07	.16	1 = 2 = 3
Child Concerns	.58	.17	1.25	.11	1.63	.19	1 < 2, 3

Note. The numbers in parentheses in column heads refer to the numbers used for illustrating significant differences in the last column titled "Post hoc."

Inferential Analyses

The data did not show any serious departure from ANOVA assumptions such as independence, normality, and equal variance. Therefore, six one-way ANOVAs, one with each of the six subscale scores as the dependent variable, were conducted. The ANOVA results indicated that there were significant group differences for Career Concerns ($F [2, 109] = 29.46, R^2 = .351, p < .001$) and Child Concerns ($F [2, 11] = 9.01, R^2 = .140, p < .001$). Tukey post-hoc tests separated the source of statistical significance of the ANOVA results (see Table 3). As might be expected, gifted adolescents were perceived by their parents to need more career counseling than gifted preschoolers or elementary students. Parents of preadolescents or adolescents had more Child Concerns than parents of preschoolers. Educational Planning and School Concerns were prevalent among all three groups.

Effect size provides additional information on the pairwise comparisons of all the groups. According to Lipsey (1990), effect sizes from .00 to .32 indicate a small effect; effect sizes from .33 to .55, a medium effect; and effect sizes from .56 and 1.20, a large effect. The effect sizes for Career Concerns and Child Concerns were large, further supporting the developmental differences in these areas of concern.

The results for School Concerns were more mixed. The *p* value of the School Concerns ANOVA was .021 ($F [2, 111] = 3.99, R^2 = .067, p = .021$), which was slightly larger than .017 and thus was not considered statistically significant. However, Bonferroni's correction can be extremely conservative, particularly if the number of comparisons is large (Montgomery, 1997). Though this result was not statistically significant, it may bear practical significance, because (there were large effect size dif-

ferences) between elementary students and preschoolers (.65) and between adolescents and preschoolers (.56; see Table 4). These results suggest that, as might be expected, that parents of older children have more School Concerns than parents of preschoolers.

There was no statistically significant difference between the three age groups for Educational Planning ($F [2, 111] = .20, R^2 = .004, p = .819$), Peer Concerns ($F [2, 111] = 1.26, R^2 = .022, p = .287$), and Family Concerns ($F [2, 110] = 2.59, R^2 = .045, p = .079$). Variance explained (R^2) for these subscales was low, ranging between .4% and 4.5%. The effect sizes for Educational Planning, Peer Concerns, and Family Concerns were all small or medium, except for one large effect size for Family Concerns between adolescents and preschoolers (.63; see Table 4). Parents of adolescents indicated more Family Concerns than parents of preschoolers did.

Discussion

In summary, the findings indicate that age was a significant factor for Career Concerns and Child Concerns. For Child Concerns (e.g., perfectionism, hypersensitivity, and overconforming to rules, among others), older children were perceived to have significantly more counseling needs than preschoolers, which is in line with the literature reviewed. Adolescents were perceived to have the highest counseling needs for Career Concerns, which is also consistent with prior research (Kelly, 1994; Silverman, 1993a).

Limitations

There are some limitations to this study. First, the target population was students who are gifted and whose par-

Table 4
Effect Sizes of the Age Groups

Variable	2-1	3-1	3-2
Educational Planning	-.07	-.18	-.11
Career Concerns	.21	1.90	1.69
School Concerns	.65	.56	-.07
Peer Concerns	.26	.43	.18
Family Concerns	.38	.63	.24
Child Concerns	.76	1.17	.43

Note. The numbers in the column heads refer to the respective Age groups: Group 1, Age < 6; Group 2, Age 6-12; and Group 3, Age > 12.

ents are seeking help from counseling centers, not the general population of gifted students. This sample, however, may not represent the entire population of students who are gifted and seek counseling help, as the participants were the clients who sought help from a university-based counseling center with differentiated, educational and career planning, and individual and family counseling services. Thirty-five percent of the clients were from a small Midwestern city; others were from nearby cities or rural areas. Besides, 95% of the parents were Caucasian, a majority of the parents (62% of the fathers and 71% of the mothers) earned at least baccalaureate, and half of the families (53%) reported that their household income was more than \$50,000 per year. Therefore, it may be difficult to say that this sample represents the entire gifted population whose parents seek help from counseling centers.

Second, it is notable that this study employed parents' perception of their children's counseling needs as the response variable. Although it seems almost impossible to have the preschooler sample any other way, the results of this study may not be relevantly reflecting children's actual counseling needs.

Third, the ANOVA models only explained .4% to 35% of the variance (R^2 ranging between .004 and .35). Other potentially significant relevant indicators such as educational placement, if included in the model, might have explained more variance.

Fourth, other confounding variables might exist that need to be controlled to explain gifted students' counseling needs. For example, socioeconomic status (SES) and test scores, which can serve as covariates, were not considered in this study, but would have controlled some of the nuisance factors. Research needs to be conducted with a more representative sample and with other potentially significant indicators/covariates for a better understanding of gifted students and their counseling needs.

In spite of the limitations, this study provides helpful empirical information on gifted students' perceived counseling needs in different categories, such as educational planning, career planning, school concerns, peer concerns, family concerns, and child concerns. Beyond this, the study improves understanding of the perceived counseling needs of the gifted in different age groups. The study has implications for parents and counselors of gifted children.

Implications for Parents

Parents of gifted students of all age groups in this study perceived a similar level of counseling needs for educational planning such as grade acceleration. Indeed, these were the strongest perceived counseling needs across all three age groups, suggesting that most parents brought their children to the counseling center because they wanted assistance with educational assessment and planning. Anecdotal information from the intake forms suggested that most parents were seeking this assistance because their schools were not providing gifted programs for their children. The parents were seeking an assessment and recommendations from the counseling center to use in advocating for services in their local schools. Hence, our study suggests that parents of gifted children who seek the services of a counseling center value challenging education and will actively seek assistance in understanding their child's abilities. It further suggests that parents are concerned about the social/emotional issues that can arise when their children experience inappropriate schooling and that they are interested in advocating for their child with professional assistance and guidance.

Implications for Counselors

The findings of this study can help counselors in both private practice and school settings provide developmentally appropriate services for gifted children. Counselors need to be aware that many parents of gifted children perceive that their children need differentiated, professional guidance from counselors with training in working with gifted children, especially in the areas of educational assessment and planning, career counseling for adolescents, and child and school concerns. The study can help motivate counselors to seek such training and provide developmentally appropriate, differentiated services for gifted children. It appears from this study that gifted children may need differentiated educational guid-

ance throughout their school careers and that parents of gifted children would strongly support schools and counselors that provide such services. The study also provides some support for prior research, which suggests that many of the counseling needs of gifted children arise because of inappropriate school environments.

The study further suggests that adolescents may be a particularly important age group to target for both differentiated career planning and differentiated individual/family counseling focused on socio-emotional concerns such as pressure to meet expectations, a sense of being different, perfectionism, hypersensitivity, low self-esteem, and depression. Because of the nature of the sample, this study cannot resolve the debate in the literature about the psychological well-being of gifted adolescents as a whole. What it does support, however, is prior research that suggests that adolescence may be a particularly vulnerable period for some gifted individuals and that parents of some gifted children perceive a need for differentiated counseling services for their gifted adolescents that specifically address issues related to giftedness such as feelings of being different.

In summary, this study provides one of the first empirical investigations of developmental differences in counseling needs among gifted children. The study strongly suggests that there is a need for counseling and guidance professionals who are specifically trained to differentiate their services to address issues unique to gifted children and adolescents.

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