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Original Research

Intersecting Identities and Adjustment to the Primary-to-Secondary School Transition: An Integrative Review

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Abstract

The primary-to-secondary school transition is a milestone for children because of the multiple changes they must navigate. Although most adjust successfully, approximately 30% of children have difficulties during this transition. Intersecting identities are also likely to influence how children navigate the adjustment of the school transfer, but there have been no syntheses of existing evidence relating to the impacts of intersectionality. We conducted an integrative review using eight databases (Education database, ERIC, ProQuest Education, PsychInfo, Scopus, SocIndex, Sociology Database, and Web of Science) and searched for quantitative or qualitative studies that examined how intersecting identities impact children's self-concept, mental health, and adjustment of the primary-to-secondary school transition. We initially identified a total of 3,193 studies through database searches, with 1,790 remaining after deduplication. After we screened the titles and abstracts, 83 studies were included for full-text screening, of which eight met the review criteria. The studies included in the review were published between 2000 and 2018; no studies were found after 2018. Syntheses of the included studies (three quantitative studies, four qualitative studies, and one mixed methods study) revealed three themes: (1) academic and social discord; (2) defining and constructing negative identities; and (3) the female body. Our findings from the review highlighted how children with minority intersecting identities are faced with additional challenges during the transition to secondary school and how these can have negative ramifications for their self-concept, mental health, and adjustment to the transition. Future research needs to be directed away from prioritizing identities, such as gender and ethnicity, to include intersectional identities.

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Introduction

Educational transitions are normative processes experienced during childhood and adolescence and consist of a move to a higher educational level; for example, moving from nursery to primary school, primary to secondary school, secondary school to college, and college to university (Topping, 2011). Each educational transition involves children navigating new physical environments, educational standards, societal expectations, and a need to form new relationships with teachers and peers. In addition, transitions are important opportunities for children to explore their identity, changes in identity, and construction of self (Osbourn et al., 2006). The transition from primary to secondary school has been highlighted as a significant transition for children because of the academic, biological, psychological, environmental, and societal changes they must navigate simultaneously (Anderson et al., 2000; Coffey, 2013; Rice et al., 2011). Success in navigating this transition has different meanings for children, parents, and teachers. However, Evangelou et al. (2008) identified five key aspects that would signify a successful transition satisfying each stakeholder involved in the transition: (1) establishing new friendships and a developed self-esteem and confidence; (2) causing no concern to parents after transitioning to their new school; (3) increasing interest in school and homework; (4) adapting to new routines and school organizations; and (5) experiencing curriculum continuity (van Rens et al., 2017). Our review examined articles on intersecting identities and the transition to secondary school between 2000 and 2022; however, there were no published articles after 2018, so the included articles ranged between 2000 and 2018.

As children move through the transition, puberty, and their new social and academic environments, identity formation is at a critical conjuncture as they embark on the journey from childhood to adolescence and begin to formulate their own place within the school and wider society. In the literature, children expressed concerns regarding the transition related to new teachers, new academic demands, new friendships, bullying, and larger environments (Duchesne et al., 2016; Lucey & Reay, 2000). Although children may not have explicitly detailed concerns over their own individual identity and social identity, children expressed concerns over "making new friends" and "fitting in," which are influenced by their social identity and their need to belong in a group whereby they are socially accepted in their new environment. Concerns over the new academic demands are directly linked to their academic ability, demonstrating further how the transition was linked to their identity (Smyth, 2016).

Literature Review

The current literature is comprehensive in detailing how the primary-to-secondary school transition notes a decline in grades and academic achievement that arises as children move to a higher school level (Benner, 2011; Serbin et al., 2013; Zeedyk et al., 2003). Differing explanations have been proposed for the drop in academic attainment, such as changes in students' attitudes to learning, the onset of adolescence, differences in teaching methodologies, and increased academic challenge (McGee et al., 2003). Evans et al. (2018) further elucidated how the academic decline affects children through environmental and individual-level constructs and the interplay of both constructs. Children have to contend with larger physical spaces, multiple new classrooms and buildings, and forging new relationships with teachers and other pupils, all of which can be challenging for children to navigate. Children may also begin to question their individual academic self-concept, learning schema, and social schema.

More recently, research has focused on other wider psychosocial factors that affect children, such as anxiety, depression, and loneliness during the transition. A common theme across the literature is the role of anxiety during the transition (Jindal-Snape et al., 2019; Symonds & Galton, 2014). Children's anxieties are frequently reported to relate to making new friends and forming relationships with teachers, bullying, getting lost in their new school, and traveling to and from their new schools. The anxieties children are confronted with are

also reported to result in a drop in self-esteem, increased loneliness, and depressive symptoms (Topping, 2011). This is further evidenced by Nowland and Qualter (2019), who examined the role of social anxiety during the transition, concluding that children who experienced higher levels of social anxiety pretransition had poor peer connectedness after the transition. Poor peer connectedness in the study was also linked to an increased sense of loneliness after the transition, establishing how the complex nature of children's concerns over the transition has consequences for the psychosocial factors they experience. For many children, the decline in academic attainment and psychosocial well-being they experience may be temporary and, after successfully navigating the multiple changes, they adjust well to their new secondary school. However, approximately one-third of children maintain an academic decline throughout their education and continue to experience negative feelings long after the transition has occurred (Waters et al., 2012).

Several groups of children have been identified as being at risk of poor adjustment to secondary school. Lithari and Rogers (2017) examined how children with special education needs and disabilities (SEN-D) inhibit care-less spaces, whereby management systems and teachers are inadequately trained to support children with SEN-D specifically during milestone transitions. Children who may have additional learning needs have their identities overlooked and neglected during the transition due to the academic expectations of the secondary school. Children with autism spectrum disorder, for example, find the transition challenging due to mental health and sensory behavior functioning and difficulties with peer relations, social skills, communication, and daily structures (Makin et al., 2017). Although anxiety has been noted to affect the majority of children during the transition, children with autism spectrum disorder experience heightened levels of anxiety and are more likely to be socially rejected by their peers, resulting in increased susceptibility to bullying and greater experiences of loneliness and depression as a result (Nuske et al., 2018).

Socioeconomic status (SES) has also been observed as a key factor influencing the transition to secondary school. Much of the literature, however, focused on how SES influenced academic achievement and the disparities between lower- and higher-SES children (i.e., choice of schools, economic resources, family stability) rather than children's well-being across the transition (Vaz et al., 2014; van Rens et al., 2017). Thus, evidence for the impact of SES on well-being across the transition is sparse. However, Moore et al. (2020) have highlighted how socioeconomic inequalities can be heightened for children as they transition to their new secondary school and this, in turn, can negatively or positively have an effect on children's well-being. Specifically, children from less affluent primary schools moving to more affluent secondary schools may suffer a detriment to their well-being because of their lowered social status in their new school. Conversely, children moving from affluent primary schools to less affluent secondary schools experience increased well-being because of their relative status in their new socioeconomic hierarchy (Moore et al., 2020).

Further, children from minority ethnic backgrounds have been highlighted as a group that is vulnerable to a poorer adjustment to secondary school (Altschul et al., 2006; French et al., 2000; Roderick, 2003). A number of factors have been identified as to why ethnic minorities are at increased risk, including stereotyping, lack of competent cultural schools, scarcity of positive role models, ethnic identity development, and emotional reaction to discrimination (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Ethnic minority children may also face difficulties during the transition because of the ethnic composition of their new school as demonstrated in a study conducted by Benner and Graham (2009). The study emphasized that when children move to a school where there is low ethnic congruence (i.e., children who attend a school where their ethnicity is in a minority), they can experience heightened levels of loneliness and anxiety; those feelings do not dissipate with time.

Gender has also been shown to impact adjustment in the primary-to-secondary school transition. There are, however, inconsistencies in the current findings; some literature proposes that girls have more difficulty in forming new friendships, while other studies imply that boys have more difficulty when forming new friendships (McGee et al., 2003; West et al., 2008). It has been reported that girls undergo significant identity changes during the transition, citing a shift in their feminine identities and a need to conform to the dominant

discourse of femininity. Girls usually achieve this through changes in their appearance and more focus on their physical features (i.e., hair, make-up, fashion) (Hoang, 2008). In contrast, boys have been found to assert their dominance as they transition through the (stereotypically heterosexual) masculine identities to achieve a high status in their new school (Richardson, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

Despite this work identifying influences on adjustment to secondary school, there has been little examination of how these factors intersect to influence the transition. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 2017) recognizes that individuals are comprised of multiple identities that interact with each other to influence a person's behavior and their self-concept. The different identities that a person holds have the capacity to cause oppression or result in privilege (Guzzetti, 2021), impacting greatly on a person's sense of self-worth and well-being. There are some studies that have examined the impact of having more than one identity on adjustment to secondary school. Some have used a quantitative design examining interplays between factors, such as gender and ethnicity, on children's attainment and well-being across the transition (Benner & Graham, 2007; Altschul et al., 2006; Roderick, 2003). Others have used qualitative designs focusing on children's narratives of how their different intersecting identities have impacted their experiences of the primary-to-secondary transition (Fisher, 2016; O'Brien, 2003). However, there has been no synthesis of this literature. It is important that the existing literature is synthesized to fully understand the complex role of intersecting identities in relation to children's academic, social, and emotional well-being before, during, and after they transition to secondary school. Then, targeted interventions can be put in place for children who are at risk of experiencing a difficult transition. Our integrative review examined the current literature on intersecting identities and the transition from primary to secondary school to synthesize the knowledge that is rooted with different paradigms, predominately education, sociology, and psychology. Such syntheses allow for new perspectives to develop, and they expand and diversify knowledge on the research topic (Cronin & George, 2020).

Research Question

How do intersecting identities impact children's self-concept, mental health, and adjustment as they transition to secondary school?

Methods

Design

Our review was conducted in accordance with the Preferred Reporting for Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) guidelines (Page et al., 2021). The protocol for the systematic review was registered on Prospero (PROSPERO reference CRD42021238304) and is available at https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/display_record.php?ID=CRD42021238304

Search Strategy

Initial scoping searches before the review informed the search strategy. We searched eight databases inclusive of psychology, sociology, and education: (Education database, ERIC, ProQuest education journals, PsycInfo, Scopus, SocIndex, Sociology, and Web of Science) using the following search terms: "transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" AND "school" OR "primary school" OR "secondary school" OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" AND "identity" OR "identities" OR "intersecting identities." The search was

conducted to include articles up to February 1, 2021; an additional search was conducted for articles from February 2, 2021 to May 13, 2022, but we did not identify any additional articles to include in the review.

The full search strategy for each database is included in the Appendix.

Table 1 presents the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review. The integrative review solely examined the transition from primary to secondary with a focus on intersecting identities. As a result, all other forms of educational transition were excluded from the review.

Table 1. *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Population	Children transitioning from primary to secondary school, typically aged between 10 and 14 years, depending on country of education	Children moving schools for other reasons (i.e., relocating) Children transitioning from other school transition (i.e., nursery to primary, secondary school to college) and further education transitions
Intervention/exposure	Transition from primary education into secondary education	Other educational transitions; gender transitions unless occurring alongside primary-to-secondary school transition
Comparator	Identity	Studies examining comparisons between groups of children based on different identities (i.e., gender, ethnicity)
Outcome	Children's experience and attitudes of how the transition impacts their identity, mental health, and adjustment to the transition Associations between identities (e.g., gender, sexuality) and mental health, adjustment to secondary school	
Study Design	All peer-reviewed journal articles using a qualitative or quantitative design	Reports and other publications that are not peer reviewed; editorials, commentaries, reviews, protocols and conference abstracts, books and book chapters, and dissertations/theses

Study Selection

We transferred relevant articles obtained through the database searches to EndNote, removed the duplicates, and then transferred them to Rayyan for title and abstract screening. We screened the titles and abstracts of the identified articles; a sample of 20% of the articles were independently screened by at least two of us. Disagreements were resolved through discussions with all three of us. The interrater reliability for title and abstract screening was 94%. After the title and abstract screening, full texts for all remaining articles were

sourced. Full-text screening was conducted with a sample of 20% independently screened by at least two of us. The interrater reliability was 100% at this stage.

Data Extraction

We designed the data extraction sheets. We used two separate data extraction sheets, one for quantitative studies and one for those with qualitative designs. Key factual data extracted from the quantitative studies included country of study, sample size, participant characteristics, aim of study, measures (with any measurement tools) of mental health, adjustment and identity, and findings related to associations between identities and mental health and adjustment. Data extracted from qualitative studies included country, sample size and characteristics of participants, underpinning theoretical perspective, data collection method, aim of study, findings relating to feelings about changes during the transition in self-concept, mental health, and adjustment.

Study Quality Assessment/Critical Appraisal

All eight studies were quality assessed using the Mixed Method Assessment Tool (Hong et al., 2018). The Mixed Method Assessment Tool does not encourage rating studies with an overall score; however, if the criteria of each question was not met, a detailed explanation was provided as to why the study was included. All studies were included in this review and no studies were excluded based on quality assessment. We (two of us) independently rated the studies for quality and the interrater reliability was recorded at 100%. Quality assessment results are displayed in Table 2.

Data Analysis

We conducted a thematic analysis because of the highly flexible approach that can be adapted to incorporate different studies; a thematic analysis is also useful for examining different perspectives and highlighting similarities and differences (Nowel et al., 2017). Initially, we gathered data into a review matrix to deconstruct the literature that included information relating directly to the review question (Dwyer, 2020). Using the completed matrix, a thematic analysis was conducted by applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages: (1) familiarizing with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; and (6) producing the report. After familiarization with the literature, we (Harris) generated latent-level initial codes from all the selected studies to identify key features. We (Harris) then collated the codes to search for relationships between them and refined the codes into potential themes. We (Harris) then reviewed the potential themes to ensure they reflected the studies included in the review and discussed the preliminary findings with the coauthors. To triangulate the data, we (Harris) applied a complementary approach, as defined by Nightingale (2009), which involved identifying themes from each different data set and sorting them into categories, allowing for the data from both research methods to inform each other and enable a richer picture of the data to emerge.
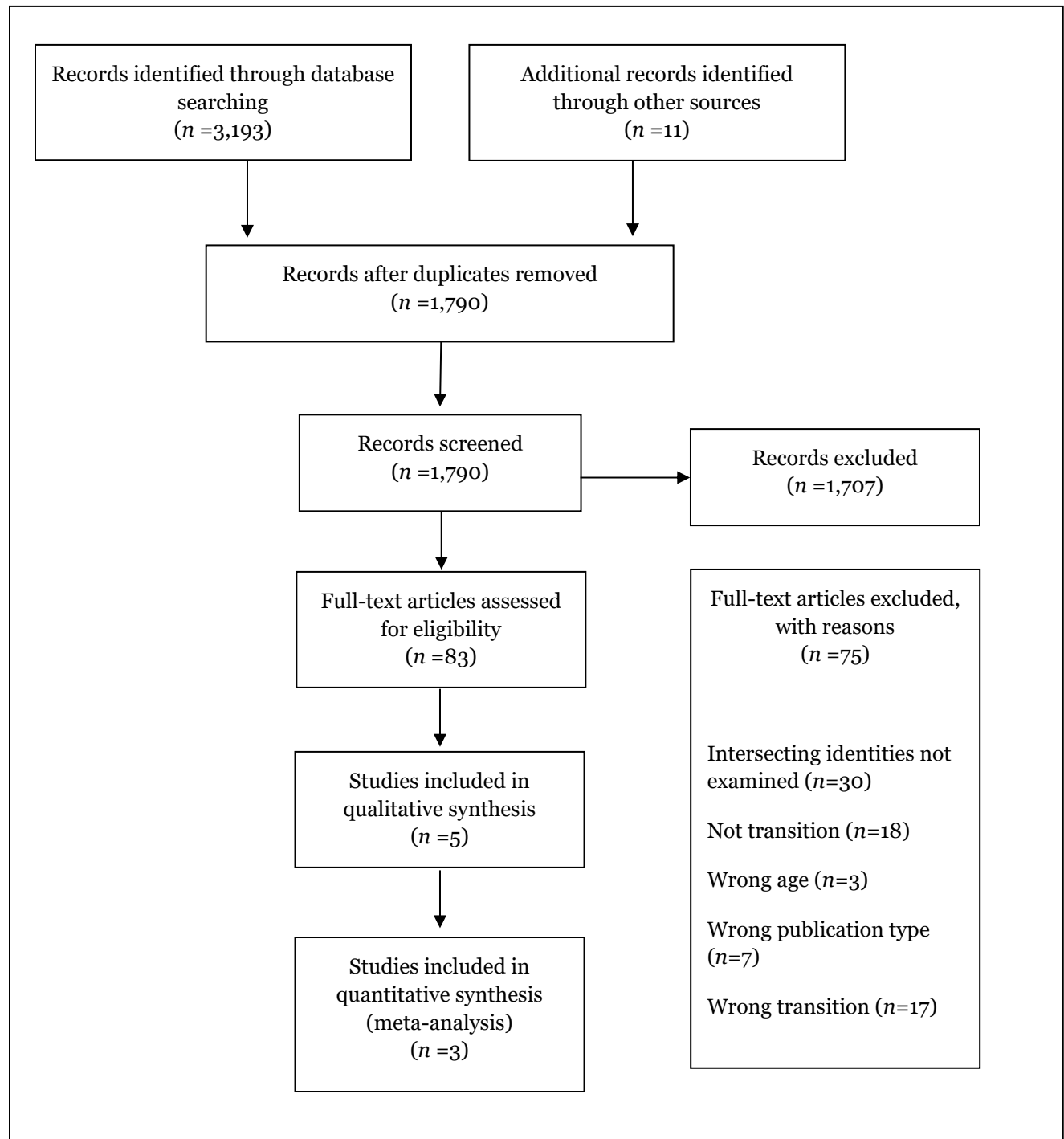
Table 2. *Critical Appraisal of Included Studies*

Quantitative	Altschul et al., 2006	Benner & Graham, 2007	Sutton et al., 2018	
Is the sampling strategy relevant to address the research question?	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Is the sample representative of the target population?	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Are the measurements appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Is the risk of nonresponse bias low?	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Is the statistical analysis appropriate to answer the research question?	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Qualitative	Lucey & Reay, 2000	Fisher, 2017	Hauge, 2009	O'Brien, 2003
Is the qualitative approach appropriate to answer the research question?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are the qualitative data collection methods adequate to answer the research question?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are the findings adequately derived from the data?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the interpretation of the results sufficiently sustained by the data?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is there coherence among qualitative data sources, collection, analysis, and interpretation?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mixed methods	Roderick, 2003			
Is there adequate rationale for using the mixed methods design to address the research question?	Yes			
Are there different components of the study effectively integrated to answer the research question?	Yes			
Are the outputs of integration of qualitative and quantitative components adequately interpretated?	Yes			
Are divergences and inconsistencies between qualitative and quantitative results adequately addressed?	Yes			
Do the different components of the study adhere to the quality criteria of each tradition of the methods involved?	Yes			

Results

Figure 1 displays the results of the systematic search and screening process in a PRISMA flow chart. We identified a total of 3,193 articles from database searches and 11 from handsearching. After removal of duplicates, 1,790 were retained, of which 83 remained after title and abstract screening. Following full-text screening, eight articles met the eligibility criteria and included in the synthesis.

Figure 1. *PRISMA Flow Diagram*

Records identified through database searching
(n =3,193)

Additional records identified through other sources
(n =11)

Records after duplicates removed
(n =1,790)

Records screened
(n =1,790)

Records excluded
(n =1,707)

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
(n =83)

Full-text articles excluded, with reasons
(n =75)

Intersecting identities not examined (n=30)

Not transition (n=18)

Wrong age (n=3)

Wrong publication type (n=7)

Wrong transition (n=17)

Studies included in qualitative synthesis
(n =5)

Studies included in quantitative synthesis (meta-analysis)
(n =3)

Study Characteristics

Table 3 shows the descriptive information from all the studies. Most of the selected studies were conducted in the United States (n = 4), with others conducted in the United Kingdom (n = 2), Ireland (n = 1), and Norway (n = 1). The influence of gender and ethnicity was examined in four studies (Altschul et al., 2006; Benner & Graham, 2007; Roderick, 2003; Sutton et al., 2018); two studies examined the impact of gender, ethnicity, social class, and SEN-D (Fisher, 2016; Lucey & Reay, 2000); one study examined gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and age (Hauge, 2009); and one study examined gender, social class, and religion (O'Brien, 2003). Children were the participants in six of the studies; children and parents in one study; and children, parents, and teachers in another.

Three of the selected studies used quantitative designs, four used qualitative designs, and one used a mixed methods design. All quantitative studies displayed in Table 4, were longitudinal, involving at least two data collection waves. In two studies, children completed self-reported measures in a questionnaire, and schools provided the Grade Point Average (GPA) (Benner & Graham, 2007; Sutton et al., 2018). In one study, teachers reported on GPA and rated students' academic behavior (Roderick, 2003). One study used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Sutton et al., 2018). One study included children from selected ethnicities exclusively (Altschul et al., 2006), and one study used a school where all children were identified as African American (Roderick, 2003). The qualitative studies typically used interviews or focus groups with children for data collection, although one study (Fisher, 2016) used classroom observations in conjunction with the interviews. Three of the qualitative studies displayed in Table 5 focused exclusively on the experiences and perceptions of girls (Fisher, 2016; Hauge, 2009; O'Brien, 2003). One study included both boys and girls (Lucey & Reay, 2000). The mixed methods study only included boys in the qualitative data (Roderick, 2003). Table 4 is a summary of the quantitative findings. In relation to outcomes in the quantitative studies and the one mixed methods study, GPA was measured in all; additionally, school climate and school worries were also reported in one study (Benner & Graham, 2007), and teachers' school transcripts and teacher assessments were measured in another study (Roderick, 2003). Identity was measured in one study (Altschul et al., 2006) through author-designed racial ethnic identity (REI) connectedness, awareness of racism, and embedded achievement scales. One study used self-reported ethnicity to measure school congruence (Benner & Graham, 2007). None of the quantitative studies measured mental health.

The three quantitative studies that examined gender and ethnicity focused on academic decline and often reported ethnicity as a main study finding. All three studies noted how male students suffered the largest declines over the transition because of factors regarding their ethnic identity, awareness of racism, and teacher stereotyping (Atschul et al., 2006; Benner & Graham, 2007; Sutton et al., 2018).

Table 3. *Descriptive summary of all studies*

Author & date	Type of study	Country	Aim of study	N	Identities	Participants
Altschul et al., 2006	Quantitative	USA	Examine the stability of REI across time and the relationship between REI and academic attainment	139	Gender and ethnicity	Children
Benner & Graham, 2007	Quantitative	USA	Examine the moderating effect of change in student ethnic congruence from middle to high school on adjustment academic performance and worries about academic performance	918	Gender and ethnicity	Children
Fisher, 2016	Qualitative	United Kingdom	Understand girls' experiences of the transition and how they negotiated the transition through a good girl discourse	10	Gender, ethnicity, social class, SEN-D	Children
Hauge, 2009	Qualitative	Norway	How girls use their bodies when negotiating subjectivities as adolescents	18	Gender, ethnicity, and sexuality	Children
Lucey & Reay, 2000	Qualitative	United Kingdom	Structural and geographical locations implicated in children's anxieties	90	Gender, ethnicity, social class, SEN-D	Children and parents
O'Brien, 2003	Qualitative	Ireland	Students' perceptions of transfer; girls' experiences of academic, social, and institutional, "out of school" and leisure, post transfer.	86	Gender, social class, religion	Children
Roderick, 2003	Mixed methods	USA	To recognize how differences in external support and skills disproportionately affects school environments, and coping resources and strategies	32	Gender and ethnicity	Children, parents, and teachers
Sutton et al., 2018	Quantitative	USA	Examine the role of the high school transition in shaping racial/ethnic and gender stratification by contextualizing students' academic declines during the high school transition within the longer window of their educational careers	6,690	Gender and ethnicity	Children

Table 4. *Summary of Quantitative Findings*

Author, year	Measurements used	Analysis	Summary of findings
Altschul et al., 2006[a]	GPA, REI, REI connectedness, awareness of racism, and embedded achievement (author designed)	Hierarchal linear modeling	Youth high in REI connectedness and embedded achievement attained better GPA at each timepoint; youth high in REI connectedness and awareness of racism at grade 8 attained better GPA by grade 9. African American girls had significantly better grades than African American boys, Latino girls, and Latino boys.
Benner & Graham, 2007	GPA, school climate (items adapted from effective battery, Gottfredson, 1984) school worries (high school worries subscale, ethnic congruence (using data from school and student)	Analysis of covariance	Students with high ethnic incongruence from middle to high school, in particular African American and male students, reported declining feelings of school belonging and had increasing worries about their academic success. Boys who had ethnic incongruence across the transition had lower school belonging than boys with ethnic congruence, but there was no difference between congruence groups in girls.
Roderick, 2003 [a]	GPA, teacher's rating of academic behavior (e.g., effort, motivation, attendance, discipline)	Descriptive statistics compared between grades 8 and 9	Both African American boys and girls experienced a decline in GPA; this was larger for boys. Students were rated more negatively by grades 9 teachers than grade 8 teachers; this change was greatest for boys.
Sutton et al., 2018 [a]	GPA, gender, and ethnicity (all student reported)	Ordinary least squared regression	Black male students had lower grades during the transition than black female students. Maintenance of high academic grades between grade 8 and 9 varies across racial/ethnic and gender subgroups; higher-achieving middle school black boys experience the greatest academic declines. White and black boys also faced academic declines before the high school transition, whereas their female student peers experienced academic declines only during the transition to high school.

Note: GPA was reported by teachers, with the exception of Sutton et al., 2018.
[a]For these studies, Grade 9 is the transitioning year.

Table 5. *Summary of Qualitative Studies*

Author, year	Analysis	Data collection	Aim of study	Findings relating to intersectionality
Fisher, 2016	Ethnography	Semistructured interviews, classroom observations	Understand girls' experience of the transition and how they negotiated the transition through good girl discourse	Primary school limits inner resilience by the quasifamilial environment so girls are not prepared for the independence expected at secondary school. Being a less mature girl makes it difficult to adjust to the social and academic demands of secondary school. Being a good girl involves following the academic and social norms expected at secondary school. Some girls negotiated power and resilience through the different discourses. Transition programs are effective in supporting the academic demands and independence rather than the social and emotional aspects of the transition.
Hauge, 2009	Exploratory/ descriptive	Interviews	How girls use their bodies when negotiating subjectivities as adolescents	Secondary schools are markers of the transformation of child to adolescence. Girls are subjected to hypersexuality at secondary school although adolescence marks the time where gender and sexuality intersect. Adolescence is "transformation of subjectivities." Body and discourse surrounding gender and sexuality are inseparable. Girls learn which practices are acknowledged and accepted. Differing intersections of categories such as age, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality mean girls have more tensions to negotiate.
Lucey & Reay, 2000	Ethnography	Focus groups and interviews	Consider some of the ways that anxiety is discussed in children in the narratives around the secondary school transition	Transition is anxiety ridden involving a space constructed in the present around an unknown future. Intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and social class are factors influencing adjustment. Adults concerned with the changing meaning of childhood from "angels" and "devils." Transition is both feared and desired by children.
O'Brien, 2003	Exploratory/ descriptive	Interviews, focus groups	How groups of Irish girls from different social class backgrounds negotiate the school transfer to seek to understand the gendered and class identities	Girls are more open about their feelings than boys regarding the transition. Working-class femininities are subject to constraint by dominant middle-class norms, facing alienation for academic and cultural success.
Roderick, 2003	Ethnography	Semistructured interviews (Qual)	Gain insight into the school, peer, familial, and developmental process that shapes school performance of African American boys	Family support is crucial in assisting the transition. Teacher stereotyping plays an important component in the transition and how children adjust academically. African American boys have fewer resources and coping strategies to manage the transition. Despite this, African American boys understand the importance of education and often persist at education, but the goals are very rarely attainable for them.

Thematic Analysis

Three themes were identified through the thematic analysis: (1) academic and social discord, (2) defining and constructing negative identities, and (3) the female body. Academic and social discord highlights the disjuncture between children and teachers/school and how peer relationships become a support for children during the transition. Defining and constructing negative identities discusses how negative teacher perceptions and stereotyping impact children's academic attainment as well as mental health and well-being. The theme of the female body discusses how girls are faced with additional pressure and social expectations, which results in normalizing discourses of gender/sexual norms as they transition to secondary school. Girls are faced with navigating societal norms relating to gender and sexuality that can be further compounded when their ethnicity is a factor.

Academic and Social Discord

The transition to secondary school often involves children leaving old friends behind and making new ones. The social aspect of the transition is particularly important for children as peer groups and friends can offer children support, safety, and social status in their new school, which can help in navigating the multiple changes that are occurring during the transition to secondary school (Smyth, 2016). However, this social focus is at conflict with teachers who are primarily focusing on children's academic path following the transition. The importance of social networks for children far exceeds the academic importance that teachers espouse, and, for some children, social networks become a sense of who they are, that is, their family. This results in children placing more emphasis on their social world as opposed to their academic environment at the point of transition. The need for children to feel a sense of belonging in their new environment is paramount and, where teachers are not providing children with the emotional needs they require during the transition, children look to external groups to provide this (Fisher, 2016; Roderick, 2003).

Socially adapting to their new school is of immense importance for children, and this has further implications for girls from lower SES backgrounds and ethnic minorities. Girls from lower SES have reported that their social group becomes their family because of not receiving support and acceptance from the school and from teachers. Roderick's (2003) study highlighted, "The grammar schools are more on at you about getting your work done" (p. 591), while Fisher's (2016) study found that females rely on friendships as a source of family, as quoted by one participant in the study, "My friends are like family to me" (p. 919).

Roderick (2003) reported that minority ethnic boys also look at social/peer groups to affirm their self-esteem and to create a sense of belonging, although this often has a negative connotation, because it is gangs from which minority ethnic boys seek support. The study suggested that male African American ethnic minorities experience a disjuncture when they transition to secondary school and, although they see the importance of education and begin with high personal goals of education and attempt to persist, the goals are very rarely attainable for them (Roderick, 2003).

Defining and Constructing Negative Identities

A common theme discussed by the children in the selected studies was that of teacher perceptions and stereotyping of the children based on their current identities, such as gender, SES, and/or ethnicity. Some of the children in the studies were aware of their racial and classed identities and, as a result, felt frustrated and rejected by the new school. It is inferred in the studies that teacher stereotyping is based on perception of the cognitive and noncognitive abilities of the students, based on the child's classification, which can influence how teachers assign schoolwork, grades, etc. (Sutton et al., 2018). Teachers have also been reported in the studies to hold high-achieving racial and/or ethnic identities more negatively than their white counterparts, indicating that ethnicity is a crucial identity in academic success (Sutton et al., 2018). Children being aware of their stereotypes impacted their academic attainment after the transition, as the rejection felt from the children in the studies led them to disengage with education and their grades to decline, and this was seen to have negative and lasting academic consequences after the transition (Roderick, 2003):

"The assistant principal asked which organization/gang I was in and even when I said none, I was told I was lying and was given a list of alternate schools to contact" (p. 587; child from an African American ethnicity).

"He (a white teacher) … I guess he just comes and occupies the class with the amount of time he's supposed to and then just leaves, he's not worried if we get ahead in life or not" (p. 593).

In addition to stereotyping about ethnicities, working-class girls have reported being very aware of their classed identities and feeling misunderstood by their teachers who are projecting middle-class values, which resulted in the girls rejecting academia. O'Brien (2003) reported that the girls in the study often felt not accepted and were often ignored, hated, and screamed at because of their classed feminine identities. Participants' quotes included: "I don't like her, you ask her, she says tell you later, she tells others" (p. 258); "She has her favorites" (p. 258); and "Most of our teachers hate us" (p. 258).

Although levels of teacher stereotyping exist across the studies, there were two instances where children found a way of renegotiating the stereotype. Roderick (2003) found that some African American boys developed alternate identities to progress through their education; identities such as being religious or participating in athletics assisted these boys in finding a place to fit in within their new environments and helped them create a positive identity that was aligned with the school ethos. O'Brien (2003) also reported how one girl used pathologizing language to echo the values of the school to gain acceptance from teachers, although the study did not explain how rejecting her working-class identity may have impacted her self-identity and well-being.

Other possible ways of rejecting stereotyping or academic norms positioned by class or ethnicity have been found if children have high REI. In one of the selected studies, high REI has been connected to children having a positive sense of in-group belonging and a higher awareness of racism, which may help buffer children from stereotypes as they transition (Altschul et al., 2006). Findings from two studies (O'Brien, 2003; Roderick, 2003) highlighted how some children can reject their stereotypes; however, there was nothing reported in the studies to demonstrate why or how some children can achieve this renegotiation and why other children cannot. The studies suggest that teacher stereotyping can alienate children from the education system, and this can be crucial at the point of transition to their academic and social adjustment (Roderick, 2003).

The Female Body
Children across the selected studies frequently discussed that the move into secondary school also marks the transformation of adolescence through puberty, resulting in an increased awareness of the sexualization of the female body for girls. For girls, it marks the end of "play and sexual innocence" associated with being a child and the beginning of "the heterosexualiation of girl-boy friendships" and the notion of compulsory heterosexuality. Compulsory heterosexuality refers to the masculine and feminine identities that are presupposed and embedded within hegemonic heterosexual society (Renold, 2006; Rich, 2003). Schools are reported as institutions whereby compulsory heterosexuality is articulated and reproduced through both the formal curriculum and the school culture that, at the point of transition, can add an additional layer that must be navigated by girls to conform to the gender roles perpetuated by society and schools (Fine & Harris, 2004). The female body becomes embroiled in a discourse of power, sexuality, and surveillance during a time when girls are already contending with the physical and biological changes of puberty and the school transition itself. The surveillance of the female body can be evidenced through the school uniforms and school policy on make-up, jewelry, and hair color that girls are confronted with in their new secondary school. Skirts are still mandatory in some schools, as documented by one child: "I wore some trousers to school, and they gave me a skirt to wear" (O'Brien, 2003, p. 260).

The use of the skirt in secondary schools is indicative of femininity and serves to exemplify the differences between girls and boys, while simultaneously giving power of the female body to someone other than its

owner—"the female." The use of make-up and jewelry at school has a double meaning for girls. In one aspect, the use of make-up and jewelry may be empowering for girls in their newfound stage of adolescence, but it also serves as surveillance of performing the expected gender norms and heterosexualization imposed by society. In contrast, the power between the schools and the use of make-up and jewelry by female students is more able to be negotiated by girls than their uniform: "I wear lipstick and mascara now, and have my hair highlighted—I'm not a little girl anymore, I'm a grown up" (Fisher, 2016, p. 916) and one participant in the study by O'Brien (2003) commented: "The teacher said get those earrings out, no I won't" (p. 260).

For girls, negotiating and challenging the use of make-up and jewelry may be a method for them to have some degree of control over their own bodies and appearance and may also signify their own transition from childhood to adolescence. The shift away from identity as a child transforms into girls learning which practices are associated with their body that are acknowledged and accepted with their newfound stage of adolescence and within the dominant discourse of sexuality and hetero-femininity. During the transition to secondary school, girls are often prevented from expressing their new identity of adolescence by the rules of conformity imposed by society, which can cause tension for girls in their new schools.

The changing of boy-girl friendships to hetero-romantic couples also emerges during the transition to secondary school: "What I like about (school), at lunch time, you get all the boys around" (Lucey & Reay, 2000, p. 197), with participants from Fisher's study (2006) noting: "Girls at secondary school want boys to notice them" (p. 918). Hauge's (2009) study also accepted that the boy-girl friendship changed: "All the girls ran after him and were in love with him because they thought he was cute" (p. 300).

Negotiating sexuality and relationships with boys must be done in an incredibly careful manner to avoid socially unaccepted situations. Emphasis is firmly situated on girls' behavior toward boys in relation to maintaining reputation and value in their own bodies. The number of boyfriends a girl has or the frequency of boyfriends a girl has also can be an indicator of if she is morally "good" or "bad" (Hauge, 2009). The transition creates a new dynamic for boy-girl relationships, and successfully navigating socially accepted situations with regard to boy-girl relationships is crucial to achieving acceptance from their female peers and avoiding negative judgments from both their male and female peers.

Discussion

Integration Into Current Literature

The aim of the integrative review was to examine the impact of intersecting identities on children's self-concept, mental health, and their adjustment to the primary-to-secondary school transition. Only eight relevant studies were identified, demonstrating a paucity of research into this area. All the studies evidenced ways in which children with intersecting identities navigated the primary-to-secondary school transition, but the roles of gender and ethnicity were most prominently examined in the studies, highlighting a prioritizing of the examination of particular identities in the existing literature. The selected studies suggested that gendered and racialized identities are embedded within schools and create structural inequality at various levels for different subgroups of people. Previous literature has already started to recognize how children are exposed to gender roles, heterosexuality, and/or heterosexism at primary and middle schools, and are one example of how schools are a place where socialization occurs (Lesko, 2000; Renold, 2005; Wallis & VanEvery, 2000). Prior to even entering secondary schools, children are aware of the dominant discourse that may explain why their identities are heightened as they enter the more grown-up environment of secondary school.

The studies were predominantly consistent in their findings with regard to racialized and gendered identities. They identified a pernicious essentializing of children's identities that negated children's agency in creating their own identity at their new school. The studies did identify two instances where children used their agency

to overshadow the discrimination they faced; however, there were no findings to indicate why or what influences and/or conditions enabled those children to use their own agency to navigate the transition. Additionally, the studies never reported on what impact rejecting their known identity had on their self-concept and mental health. Our review highlights how the transition to secondary school is an arena of risk for a lot of children; any deviation away from the dominant discourse can cause marginalization, further alienating them from the education system. Conforming to societal norms is a tremendous pressure that children must also contend with as they transition to secondary school.

As demonstrated in the selected studies, girls and boys have different discourses to navigate as they transition to secondary school, and this is further exaggerated when additional identities are introduced. As the transition to secondary school also coincides with the transition into adolescence and into sexual maturity, the additional role of sexuality for girls means they have to negotiate new meanings and values in relation to boy-girl relationships and the female body (Hauge, 2009). This also has to be completed in ways that fit with societal norms and expectations, and dominant discourses perpetuated by a hegemonic patriarchal power that is consistently being reproduced and regulated by men (Tollman, 2006). Although highlighting the ways that ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are impacting children, sexuality was situated in only the heterosexual discourse reinforcing the concept of compulsory heterosexuality that exists in current society (Rich, 2003).

Limitations

A strength of our current review was that it was the first to synthesize literature from diverse methodologies to provide insights into how intersecting identities can affect children's self-concept, well-being, and adjustment in the primary-to-secondary school transition. However, because of the lack of literature surrounding intersecting identities and the transition, the entirety of the impact cannot be fully understood. There was a lack of any description of children who may identify with a sexuality that does not follow the dominant discourse of society in the existing studies. The studies were also lacking in any examination of the role of sexuality for boys, firmly positioning sexuality as the sole responsibility of girls. Religion was also absent from the discussion. Religious beliefs can impact how girls think about sexuality and their beliefs around boy-girl relationships (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009). There are myriad ways in which SES impacts children when they transition to secondary school, but typically, studies have only focused on one aspect, such as stereotyping or lacking resources. Additionally, there were brief references to additional identities in some of the studies. For example, disability and special education needs were briefly mentioned by Fisher (2016), and religion was briefly referred to by O'Brien (2003). However, there was no detailed interpretation of how these identities impacted children as they transitioned to secondary school; this again highlighted how identities are formatted into a hierarchy of importance.

Implications for Theory and Practice

Examining the school as an institution within society and the ideals and ethos that permeate throughout it may be beneficial in capturing how intersecting identities are set in relation to the primary-to-secondary school transition. Our review demonstrated that intersecting identities play a vital role in how the primary-to-secondary school transition is navigated and impacts adjustment, self-concept, and mental health. Thus, it is important for schools to ensure targeted work to support children who may not fit the dominant societal discourse to navigate the transition successfully. The findings of our integrative review can be beneficial for schools, teachers, policymakers, and parents in understanding the challenges that children with intersecting identities face as they transition from primary to secondary school. The findings may also be helpful when considering future transition programs or tailored programs for children who may be identified as being at risk of unsuccessfully navigating the transition.

Future research would benefit from highlighting how nondominant intersecting identities, such as religion, physical disability, special education needs, and sexual identity impact children as these identities are absent

from the literature. Future research would also benefit from using a mixed methods methodology as this would enable examination of the complexity of intersecting identities by highlighting associations with adjustment, along with first-hand narratives of children and their individual experiences of the primary-to-secondary school transition. This will be beneficial to explain these associations and highlight children who are at increased risk of having difficulties with the primary-to-secondary school transition (Tilleczek, 2007).

Conclusion

The studies included in our review revealed that intersecting identities play a vital role in how the primary-to-secondary school transition is navigated and how it impacts adjustment, self-concept, and mental health. However, the paucity of literature still leaves identities that have not been fully explored. Although the systematic review searched for articles between 2000 and 2022, there were no articles identified after 2018. The themes identified in the review have highlighted the significant challenges that children with intersecting identities face during their transition to secondary school. Societal norms are imposed on children during a time when identity development is occurring, i.e., as children move into adolescence. Focusing on areas surrounding identity and the impact this has on children's mental health, self-concept, and well-being may be paramount in understanding how and why some children have difficulties navigating the transition. The paucity of literature on nondominant intersecting identities (e.g., religion, disability, SEN-D) illustrates how some children may not be being understood within the realm of all their identities.

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Appendix

Search Strategy 02 January 21

Education Database   163
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (NOFT) and "school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school"
OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (NOFT) and "identity" OR "identities" OR
"intersecting identities" (NOFT)
Limit to:
    Peer reviewed
    2000-2021
    Scholarly Journal
    Article
    English
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   43

ERIC   527
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (NOFT) and "school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school"
OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (NOFT) and "identity" OR "identities" OR
"intersecting identities" (NOFT)
Limit to:
    Peer reviewed
    ERIC Journals only
    2000-2021
    Journal articles
    English
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   0

ProQuest Education Journals   340
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (NOFT) and "school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school"
OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (NOFT) and "identity" OR "identities" OR
"intersecting identities" (NOFT)
Limit to:
    Peer reviewed
    2000-2021
    Journal Articles
    English
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   45

PsychInfo   231
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (Abstract) and "school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school"
OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (Abstract) and "identity" OR "identities" OR
"intersecting identities" (Abstract)
Limit to:
    Peer reviewed
    2000-2021
    Peer-reviewed
    Human
    English
    Journal Article
    Exclude dissertations.
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   14

Scopus   939
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (Abstract, Title and Keywords) and "school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school" OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (Abstract, Title and Keywords) and "identity" OR "identities" OR "intersecting identities" (Abstract, Title and Keywords)
Limit to:
    2000-2020
    Article
    English
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   163

SocIndex   91
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (Abstract or Author supplied abstract) and
"school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school" OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (Abstract or Author supplied abstract) and "identity" OR "identities" OR "intersecting identities" (Abstract or Author supplied abstract)
Limit to:
    Scholarly peer reviewed
    2000-2021
    Article
    English
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   9

Sociology Database   163
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (NOFT) and
"school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school" OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (NOFT) and "identity" OR "identities" OR "intersecting identities" (NOFT)
Limit to:
    Peer reviewed.
    2000-2021
    Scholarly journal
    Article
    English
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   22

Web of Science
"transition" OR "transfer" OR "move" (Topic) and   729
"school" OR "primary secondary" OR "secondary school" OR "middle school" OR "high school" OR "secondary education" (Topic) and
"identity" OR "identities" OR "intersecting identities" (Topic)
Limit to:
    2000-2020
    English
    Articles
An updated search was conducted from 02 February 2021–13 May 2022.   131

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