

Title of Symposium: School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations for Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

Chair: Gerald R. Adams  
Department of Family and Human Development  
Utah State University  
Logan, Utah

Participants: Jacquelyn A. Hawkins and Thomas J. Berndt  
Department of Psychology  
Yale University  
New Haven, CT  
Presentation: Adjustment Following the Transition to Junior High

Jacquelynne Eccles, Carol Midgley, Harriet Feldlaufer and David Reuman  
Department of Psychology  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor, MI  
Presentation: Transition into Junior High School and Early Adolescent Development

Wyndol Furman and Phillip Shaver  
Department of Psychology  
University of Denver  
Denver, CO  
Presentation: The Effect of the Transition to College on Social Relationships

Raymond Montemayor, Barbara Brown and Gerald R. Adams  
Department of Family and Consumer Studies  
University of Utah  
Salt Lake City, UT  
Presentation: Changes in Identity Status and Psychological Adjustment After Leaving Home and Entering College

Discussant: Dale Blyth  
Department of Psychology  
Ohio State University  
Columbus, Ohio

Organizer/Chair: Gerald R. Adams  
Utah State University

## School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations for Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

Until relatively recently the study of contextual variables within the field of child/adolescent development has remained ignored. Surprisingly, even the study of transition effects associated with changes within a social contextual environment has remained understudied. Fortunately, several "transition" studies have been or are currently underway within schooling contexts that can help provide important descriptive clues as to the implications of transition effects within an educational context for children and adolescents. Therefore, a symposium has been developed to review the transition effects or associations for social, emotional and academic development of early and late adolescents. The symposium is organized with the notion that transitions in schooling are equally important for youths who are entering adolescence as it is for those which are attempting to leave it (adolescence). Thus, research teams that are examining transitions into junior high school from elementary school, and those that are studying the transition from high school into college, have been brought together for a major symposium designed to address the general adjustment issues associated with transitions in schooling. The discussant, noted for his pioneering research on this topic, will compare and contrast the findings of the four presentations with past work, analyze the major features emerging between and across the four studies, and explore with those attending the symposium directions for further study. It is critical that schools be examined as social contextual environments that are associated with both potential positive and negative implications for personality and social development. This symposium has been developed with the intent to examine such issues, to analyze from four longitudinal studies the descriptive nature of social development during transitions, and to project into the future further important research questions and issues.

TYPE ABSTRACT HERE—BE SURE TO STAY WITHIN BORDER

ADJUSTMENT FOLLOWING THE TRANSITION TO JUNIOR HIGH  
Jacquelyn A. Hawkins & Thomas J. Berndt  
Yale University

This study examines the transition from elementary to junior high school (JHS), focusing on the role of friendship and influence of school environment on adjustment. 101 students were studied at 3 times: Spring of 6th grade (pre-transition), and twice in 7th grade (early and late post-transition). The sample consisted of 2 cohorts. The first (C1) attended a traditional JHS. The second (C2) attended a JHS with students and teachers grouped into small teams (100 students, 4 teachers). Broad-based assessments were completed at each time from 3 perspectives: self-report, peer ratings, and teacher ratings. Measures included self-concept, attitudes toward school, peer ratings, teacher ratings, and in-depth interviews on best friendships that included open- and closed-ended items resulting in multiple friendship measures.

Measures of adjustment dropped post-transition. For example, social self-esteem declined in both JHSs. Sociometric measures showed a drop in popularity and an increase in anonymity post-transition. However, the effects of school environment were reflected in these measures as well. For example, C1's ratings of teacher support decreased post-transition, but C2's increased. Friendship measures (quality and contact with friends) affected adjustment to JHS, and showed overall higher scores by time 3. Children with higher quality and contact scores pre- and early post-transition had higher self-concept and school attitudes scores in JHS. In summary, transition to JHS had negative effects on these children. Fewer negative effects were seen in those with supportive best friends and those in more intimate and supportive school environments.

SUBMITTER'S NAME: Jacquelyn A. Hawkins

SUBMITTER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: 

Title of Symposium: School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations  
with Social, Emotional and Academic Development  
Title of Paper: Adjustment Following the Transition to Junior High School

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Slides will be used.

Social support from friends protects adults from stress associated with transitions. Research demonstrates negative effects of change on children as well. School transitions are a stress experienced by almost all children through promotion from elementary school (ES) to Junior high (JHS) or high school. As friendships become increasingly important with age, social support from friends should increase and aid adjustment to transitions. Characteristics of school environments also should affect adjustment. This study reports the effects of transition from ES to JHS, the role of friendships in adjustment, and the influence of school environments.

101 students were studied at 3 times: Spring of 6th grade (pre-transition), Fall of 7th grade (early post-transition), and Spring of 7th grade (late post-transition). The sample consisted of 2 cohorts. The first (C1, n=57) attended a traditional JHS. The second (C2, n=44) attended a JHS with students and teachers grouped into small "teams" (100 students, 4 teachers) within the larger school. Broad-based assessments were carried out at each time from 3 perspectives: self-report, peer ratings, and teachers' ratings.

Subjects completed questionnaires on self-concept, attitudes toward school, and peer ratings. Teachers rated subjects' classroom behavior. Schools provided grades, achievement test scores, and attendance records. Subjects reported information on their families and after-school activities. Each child was interviewed in-depth about his/her relationships with best friends (up to 3 per child). Interviews included open- and closed-ended questions, resulting in multiple measures of friendship.

This report describes the effects of transition on adjustment and friendships, and the differential effects of the two types of JHS. First, measures of self-concept and school attitudes dropped post-transition. For example, social self-esteem declined for both cohorts, indicating that students felt less socially secure in JHS. This effect is supported by sociometric measures: anonymity scores increased post-transition, and popularity decreased. However, the effects of school environment were reflected in these measures as well. For example, C1's perceptions of teacher support decreased post-transition, but C2's increased. Thus, schools promoting close, cooperative relations among students and between students and teachers lessen the negative impact of transition. Friendship measures showed improvement in close relationships post-transition. For example, overall quality of best friendships increased with time, as did overall contact with friends. Children may turn to close friends in response to the stresses of the new environment, or may find that the larger peer group provides more compatible friends. Friendships also affected adjustment to JHS. Children with higher quality and contact scores pre- and early post-transition had higher self-concept and school attitudes scores in JHS.

In summary, transition to JHS has negative effects on children, but children with better friendships before and just after transition have better attitudes toward themselves and school in JHS. By late post-transition, friendships improve over baseline. School structure also affects students' perceptions of the environment and themselves. Thus, transition to JHS has positive and and negative effects, and understanding these should enable us to decrease the stresses of the process.

TYPE ABSTRACT HERE—BE SURE TO STAY WITHIN BORDER

TRANSITION INTO JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND EARLY ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT Jacquelynne Eccles, Carol Midgley, Harriet Feldlaufer and David Reuman, Dept of Psychology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI

Early adolescence is a time of change both within the individual and in the home and school environments. Developmental studies have shown that children's achievement orientation declines with age and that this decline is especially marked as they transit into junior high school. This paper explores the possibility that systematic changes in the social life of the early adolescent, especially in the school setting, contribute to this decline. The paper addresses three questions: (a) Are there systematic changes in children's achievement-related beliefs as they move into junior high school? (b) Are there systematic changes in the experiences children have at school as they move into junior high school? and (c) How might these changes in school experiences be related to the decline in children's achievement beliefs?

We will suggest that the transition itself contributes to the decline in children's, especially females', self concepts and that the increase in school practices that focus students' attention on ability assessments coupled with the decrease in school practices that provide students with a sense of control and autonomy contribute to the decline in students' attitudes toward school and toward themselves as students.

**SUBMITTER'S NAME:** Jacquelynn Eccles, Carol Midgley, Harriet Feldlaufer and David Reuman

**SUBMITTER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:** [REDACTED]

Title of Symposium: School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations  
for Social, Emotional and Academic Development

Title of Paper: Transition into Junior High School and Early Adolescent Development

SS# of Chair: [REDACTED]

Slides will be used.

Early adolescence is a time of change both within the individual and in the home and school environments. Developmental studies have shown that children's achievement orientation declines with age and that the decline is especially marked when they enter middle or junior high school. In particular, numerous studies have shown that children become more pessimistic about their academic abilities, more anxious in academic settings, and less positive in their attitudes toward school as they move into junior high school. This paper explores the possibility that systematic changes in the social life of the early adolescent, especially in the school setting, contribute to this decline in the students' attitudes. The paper addresses three questions: (a) Are there systematic changes in children's achievement-related attitudes and beliefs as they move into junior high school? (b) Are there systematic changes in the experiences children have at school as they move into junior high school? and (c) How might these changes in school experience be related to the decline in children's achievement beliefs?

Consistent with suggestions by Simmons, Blyth and colleagues, we believe that the concurrent changes in school setting and

physiological processes make early adolescents, especially females, particularly vulnerable to events that undermine one's confidence and one's achievement motivation. But, in addition, we believe that there are specific characteristics associated with the transition into junior high school that exacerbates these potentially negative effects. One such negative change is the movement from the small, relatively contained classroom format of the elementary school to the more impersonal, large, and departmentalized classroom format of the junior high school. Such a change requires that the student adjust to an entirely new social hierarchy, to a new learning environment, and to a new body at the same time. As Simmons et al. have suggested, a K-8 school format would alleviate at least one of these changes, easing adaptation to puberty.

We also believe that there are specific classroom level characteristics at the junior high school that contribute to the decline in the students' attitudes. The limited, available literature comparing elementary school and junior high school classrooms suggests that there may be a developmental mismatch between the emerging skills and needs of the early adolescent and the structure of junior high school classrooms. In particular, there appears to be an increase in those classroom practices that focus students' attention on ability assessments and a decrease in those practices that provide students' with some sense of control and autonomy (see Eccles, Midgely, and Adler, in press).

Evidence from the school environment literature and the achievement



motivation literature suggests that both of these practices undermine achievement motivation and attitudes toward school. These negative effects should be especially marked at this age period for two reasons: First, they coincide with the major social environmental changes associated with movement into junior high school. Second, they run counter to the developmental changes taking place among the students. As children mature they become more skillful, knowledgeable, and competent; they become better able to take responsibility, make decisions, and control their own learning. They also feel more able to take responsibility for their own learning. One would hope that students would be provided with increasing opportunities to have control over their lives as they get older and that the schools would provide an environment facilitative of task involved rather than ego involved learning (Nicholls, 1979), particularly as students enter adolescence. Unfortunately, evidence suggests that the opposite is more typical. This evidence and the theoretical position taken in this abstract will be discussed in more detail in this presentation.

TYPE ABSTRACT HERE—BE SURE TO STAY WITHIN BORDER

The EFFECT OF THE TRANSITION TO COLLEGE ON SOCIAL  
RELATIONSHIPS

Wyndol Furman & Phillip Shaver, University of  
Denver.

The purpose of this study was to examine changes in social relationships during the transition to college. 166 incoming students completed questionnaires during the summer prior to their arrival at college and again during each of the three academic quarters. The students rated 6 characteristics of their relationships with family members, hometown friends, and romantic partners and with their new friends and romances at college. Additionally, they rated their loneliness and overall social satisfaction.

Students experienced the transition to college as difficult. In the fall, they were more lonely than before and throughout the first year, they were less satisfied with their new relationships and social network than they had been before. Those who were more dissatisfied found the transition to be particularly difficult.

Old friendships and romantic relationships dwindled as the year proceeded. In contrast, relationships with father, mother, and siblings tended to improve during the freshman year. The pre-college relationships, however, had little effect on success in making the transition.

The number of new acquaintances, close friendships, and romantic relationships increased as the year proceeded. Although old relationships did not affect the ease of transition, satisfaction with college friendships and college romances were strongly predictive of the ease of the transition and overall satisfaction throughout the year. The paper concludes with a discussion of the role of social relationships during transitions.

SUBMITTER'S NAME: Wyndol Furman and Phillip Shaver

SUBMITTER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: ██████████

Title of Symposium: School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations  
for Social, Emotional and Academic Development

Title of Presentation:

The Effect of the Transition to College on Social Relationships

SS# of Chair: [REDACTED]

For many young adults the transition from high school to college is a social and psychological watershed. The purpose of this study was to examine changes in social relationships and social networks during this transition. We considered both general longitudinal trends and important individual differences.

A sample of 166 incoming students completed questionnaires during the summer prior to their arrival at college and again during each of the three academic quarters of their freshman year. The students rated the degree of affection, intimacy, support, companionship, conflict, and satisfaction with their relationships with family members, hometown friends, and romantic partners and with their new friends and romances at college. The questionnaires also contained several measures of adjustment, including current feelings of loneliness, and overall satisfaction with social life.

As expected, students experienced the transition to college as difficult. In the early part of the year, they were more lonely than before and throughout the first year, they were less satisfied with their new relationships and social network than they had been during the previous summer. Those who were more dissatisfied found the transition to be particularly difficult.

One of the major effects of the transition was to change the students' pre-college social relationships. Old friendships and romantic relationships dwindled as the year proceeded. Relationships with father, mother, and siblings also changed although in a different manner. Feelings of intimacy and affection toward each family member were stronger and conflict was less frequent during the freshman year than they had been during the summer before. The students also reported greater satisfaction with their relationships with father and siblings during the school year than they had before. Apparently, being in college provided a new perspective on these long-standing relationships.

What effect did these pre-college relationships have on success in making the transition? Surprisingly little. During the summer, ratings of satisfaction with friendships, romantic relations, and family relationships were all significantly associated with overall satisfaction with one's social network ( $M r = .28$ ). During the school year, however, ratings of satisfaction with the old relationships were unrelated to this or other measures of adjustment ( $M r = .06$ ). These findings suggest that the task of building a new social network so preoccupies college freshmen that the quality of their pre-college network has little effect on their adjustment during the freshman year.

As the year proceeded, the students developed new networks. Not surprisingly, the number of new acquaintances, close friendships, and romantic relationships increased as the year proceeded. The amount of casual dating and participation in groups increased as well. During the fall quarter or the early stages of relationships, both friendships and romantic relationships were principally characterized by companionship and intimacy. These ratings increased as the relationships continued, but even larger increases were observed in support, affection, and conflict. The findings suggest that the nature and perhaps functions of relationships changed as they developed.

Although old relationships did not affect the ease of transition, the development of new ones did. Satisfaction with college friendships and college romances were strongly predictive of the ease of the transition and overall satisfaction throughout the year ( $M r = .38$ ).

Our conference paper will conclude with a discussion of the role of in social relationships in transitions. Theoretical implications of the findings for a more general understanding of transitions will be considered.

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CHANGES IN IDENTITY STATUS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENT AFTER LEAVING HOME AND ENTERING COLLEGE

Raymond Montemayor, Barbara Brown and Gerald R. Adams  
Department of Family & Consumer Studies, University  
of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah

Earlier transition studies have suggested that the stress of transition in school can be associated with psychological adjustment problems. For late adolescence, graduating from high school and leaving home involves a transition that can be accompanied by homesickness and adjustment problems. Therefore, an investigation was completed using longitudinal data to assess the degree to which the transition from leaving home to attending college was associated with psychological adjustment problems. Further, given prior research has suggested a college experience enhances identity formation and development, data were also collected to determine if growth in identity occurs during this same transition period.

A longitudinal study was initiated where a random sample of out-of-state high school students was obtained during the completion of the senior year of high school. Approximate 50 male and 50 female students were assessed on four occasions. These occasions included (1) during the senior year prior to leaving home, (2) during the first two weeks of the first quarter, (3) toward the end of the first quarter, and (4) again, toward the end of the freshmen year.

On all four occasions subjects were assessed on their self-reported homesickness, psychological adjustment using psychiatric screening devices, and their identity status development.

Data have been collected and are currently being analyzed. The analyses will examine the inter-correlation between constructs, and will be used to address developmental patterns over the four data points.

SUBMITTER'S NAME: Raymond Montemayor

SUBMITTER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER: XXXXXXXXXX

Title of Symposium: School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations  
for Social, Emotional and Academic Development

Title of Paper: Changes in Identity Status and Psychological Adjustment After  
Leaving Home and Entering College

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Slides will be used

While several research programs on the study of "school transitions" have been undertaken with junior and senior high and middle school age populations, relatively little is known about the transition from senior high school into college during late adolescence. This school transition is not only associated with the obvious stresses of a new school environment, but also includes for most adolescents leaving home as well. Earlier transition studies have suggested that the stress of transition in schooling contexts can be associated with psychological adjustment problems. For late adolescence, leaving home can likewise be associated with a transition that is accompanied by homesickness. Past research suggests homesickness is commonly manifested by feelings of grief, depression, and a sense of loss. Although much research has been done on the problems which adolescents face in adapting to the social and academic environment of college, virtually no research exists that examines homesickness, although past research suggests as much as 70% of entering freshmen (e.g., Lokitz & Sprandel, 1976) report being homesick during their first year at college.

Given transitions are thought to be stress "inducers," it is important to understand the implications of graduating from high school, and leaving home to attend college, for general psychological adjustment. Are there major psychological adjustment problems associated with this transition? If so, are they short-lived or generally enduring effects over the first year of college? What are the general descriptive trends in psychological adjustment between high school and the first year of college?

Finally, recent research by Adams and Fitch (1983) suggests that a college experience enhances ego stage and identity status development. However, this past research documents only growth within a college setting and does not address the extent of growth that accrues after graduating from high school and during the

first major year in college. To what extent is there either positive (advancement) versus negative (regression) growth in identity development during the transition period following departure from home after graduation from high school?

To address such questions a longitudinal research program was initiated where a random sample of out-of-state high school students were obtained during the completion of their senior year of high school. These students (approximately 50 males and 50 females) were then assessed on four occasions. First, they were assessed during the end of their high school year, prior to leaving home, and before moving to college. Second, they were assessed during the first two weeks of the first quarter. Third, they were reassessed approximately around Thanksgiving and close to the end of the first term. Fourth, they were given a final assessment toward the end of their spring term (end of first year of college).

A "homesickness" scale was developed using characteristics that have been previously shown to be associated with the syndrome--e.g., boredom, depression, loneliness, being upset, etc. Internal consistency of the items will be assessed for each data collection point. Psychological adjustment was measured by Langner (1962) psychiatric symptoms screening measure. This measure assesses twenty general behavioral symptoms that allow a classification of unimpaired (well, mild, or moderate) or impaired (marked, severe, or incapacitated). Also, the Bradburn measure of Positive and Negative Affect was used to measure psychological mood. Finally, the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (Adams et al., 1979) was used to measure ego identity formation. This measure allows the researchers to categorize subjects as diffused, foreclosed, in moratorium, or identity achieved, based upon reported exploration/searching and the presence or absence of commitment to ideological aspects of occupation, politics and religion. Lower statuses (diffusion, foreclosure) have been shown to be associated with less interpersonal competencies, weaker ego stage development, poorer self-concepts, rigidity, and conformity behaviors. Higher statuses (moratorium, identity achieved) have been shown to be associated with more positive mental health indices and more complex

psychological personality characteristics.

Data on this project have been coded and placed on tape. Analyses are currently underway. The analyses will examine the inter-correlation between constructs, and developmental patterns over the four basic data collection points. Analyses will explore sex differences in intraindividual change, trends in intraindividual change between high school and college and changes that occur throughout the first year of the freshmen year, and similarities and differences in intraindividual change will be examined.



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DISCUSSANT'S COMMENTS: THE ANALYSIS OF FOUR LONG-ITUDINAL STUDIES EXAMINING SCHOOL TRANSITIONS  
Dale Blyth, Department of Psychology, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

The discussant, noted for his pioneering research on the study of school transitions, will compare and contrast the findings of the four presentations with his own work and that of others. He will analyze the major features emerging between and across the four studies. Finally, he will explore directions for further investigation. Overall, it will be argued that it is critical that schools be examined as social contextual environments that can be associated with potential positive and negative implications for personality, social and academic development.

**SUBMITTER'S NAME:** Dale Blyth

**SUBMITTER'S SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:**

Title of Symposium: School Transitions: Positive and Negative Associations for  
Social, Emotional, and Academic Development

Discussants Presentation: The Analysis of Four Longitudinal Studies Examining  
School Transitions

SS of Chair: ██████████

The discussant, noted for his pioneering research on the study of school transitions, will compare and contrast the findings of the four presentations with his own work and that of others, will analyze the major features emerging between and across the four studies, and will explore directions for further study. It is critical that schools be examined as social contextual environments associated with both potential positive and negative implications for personality, social and academic development. The discussant will critically analyze the four longitudinal studies and their descriptive portrait of the nature of social development during transitions, and will project into the future toward important additional research questions and issues.