

How does School Environment Influence Stage of Development?

**(in) A Stage-Environment Fit Ethnography
in two UK School Systems**

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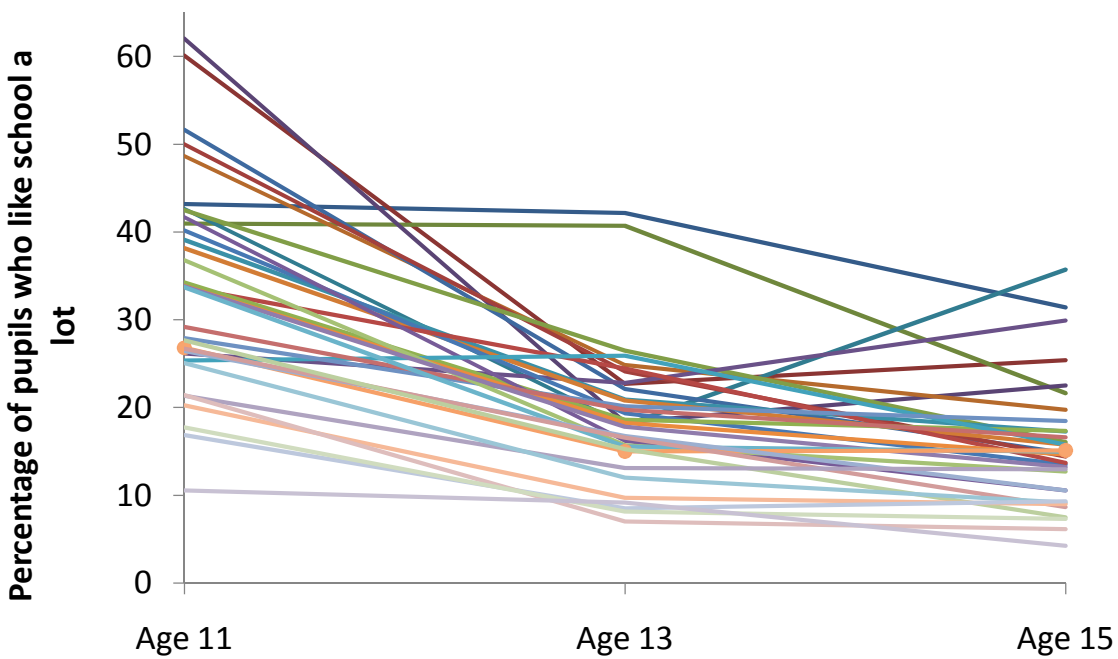
Faculty of Education

Attitude to School

- Attitude to school comprises multiple perceptions, i.e. of lessons, learning and relationships with teachers and peers (earliest identified is Tenenbaum 1944).
- Measurements of attitude to school include multidimensional scales, and single affective items i.e. *how much do you like school?*
- Attitude to school is understudied in comparison to educational achievement and motivation.

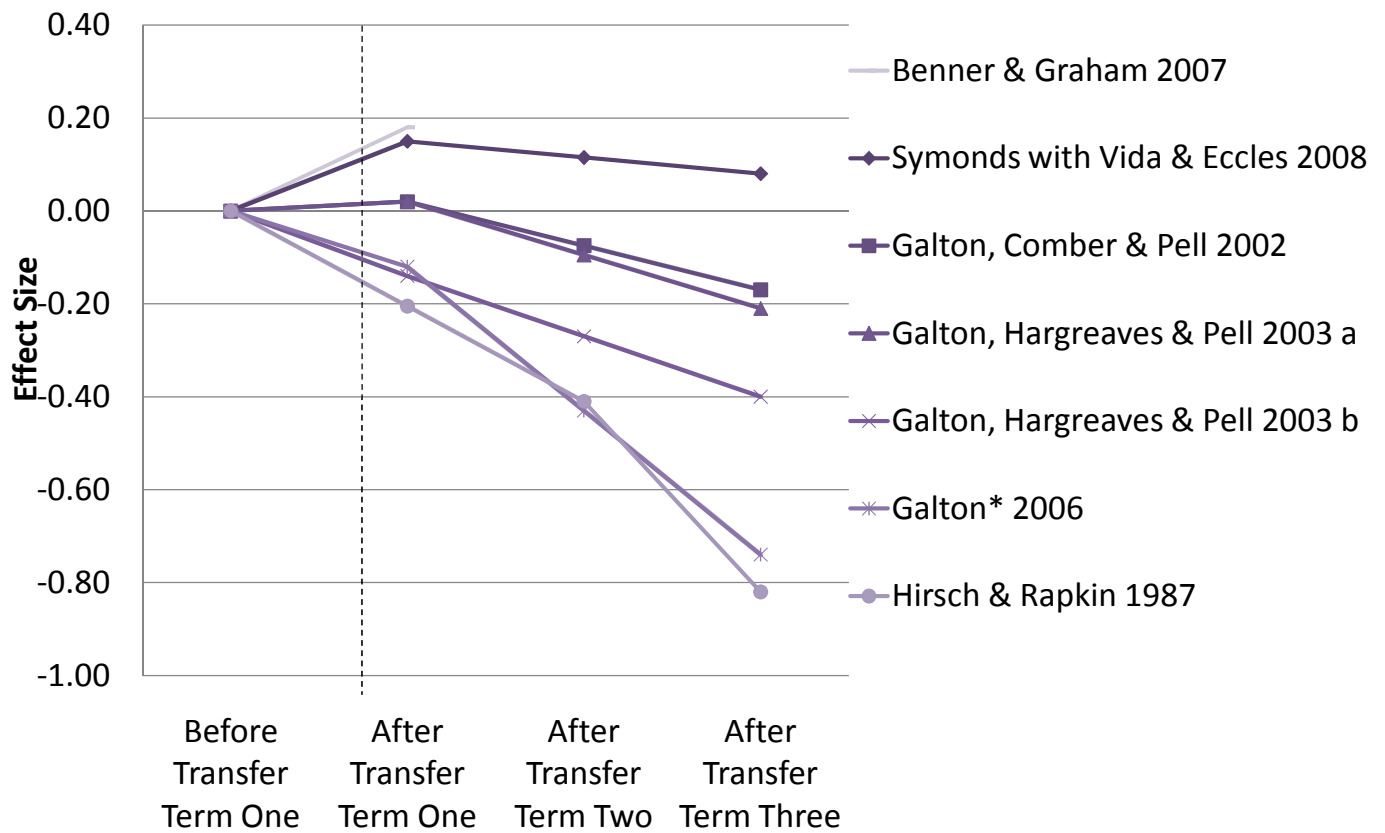
Drops in Attitude to School Between Age Groups in 36 Countries

Health Behaviour in School Aged Children Survey (HBSC) 2005-6 Data

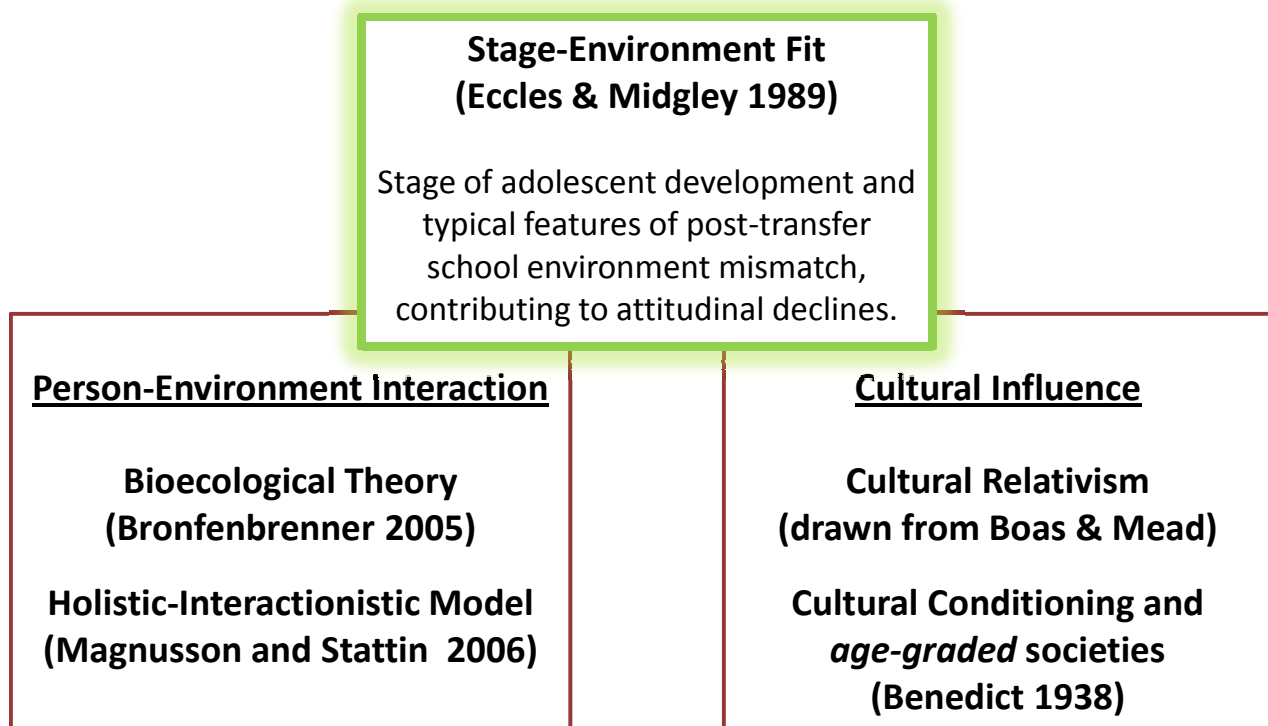


NB the two high scores at age 13 are Norway and the Netherlands.
The four rising scores at age 15 are Slovenia, Hungary, Austria and Malta.

Declining Attitude to School in the UK and the US Across School Transition



Developmental Theory Framework



UK (English) School Structures

Key Stage	Age	School Year	All Through	Two Tier	Three Tier A	Three Tier B	Three Tier C
KS1	4/5	NA	Reception	Reception	Reception	Reception	Reception
	5/6	1		Primary	Lower	Junior	Lower
	6/7	2					
7/8	3						
KS2	8/9	4				Middle	
	9/10	5					Middle
	10/11	6					
KS3	11/12	7		Secondary			
	12/13	8			Upper		
KS4	13/14	9				High	
	14/15	10					Upper
	15/16	11					
6 th Form	16/17	12		Inclusive or separate			
	17/18	13					

Mixed Methods Ethnography of School Transitions



Survey One	Interviews	Targeted Observations	Participant Observations	Audio Diaries	Survey Two
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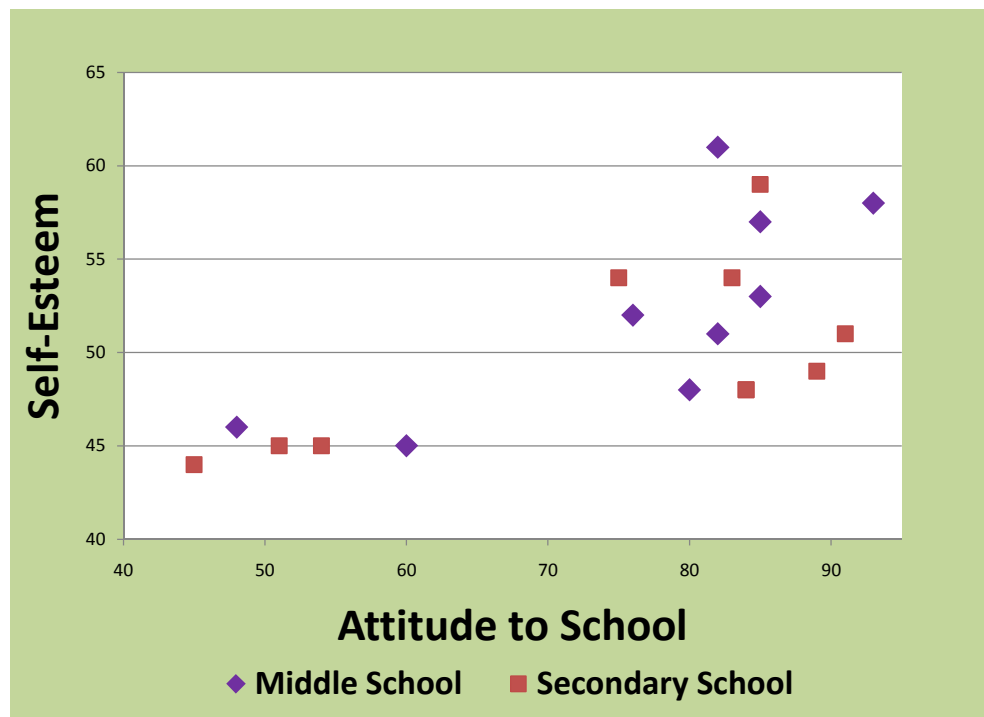
SECONDARY SCHOOL

197 children	10 children (girls N 4, boys N 6, age av. 11.64)				197 children
	40	31	21	10	

MIDDLE SCHOOL

55 children	10 children (girls N 4, boys N 6, age av. 11.56)				86 children
	40	32	21	9	

The Matched Sample of Early Adolescents in Middle and Secondary School



1a. Attitudes were Qualitatively Similar in Both Schools

- Affective attitudes to school environment were qualitatively similar where similar environmental stimuli were presented.

Adolescents liked friendly & humorous teachers, school built facilities and lunchtimes, and disliked unauthentic and inactive lessons and bullying.

- Value attribution attitudes were similar: Pupils in both schools primarily valued school for their future careers.

This did not change across one school year

1b. School Environment Best Predicted Attitude to School

- Multiple regression uncovered that the foremost influences of attitude to school were teachers and enjoyment of lessons at both times.

Time One	B	Time Two	B
Teachers 1	0.356	Teachers 2	0.310
Lesson Enjoyment	0.237	Lesson Enjoyment	0.315
Age	0.155	Gender	0.206
<i>Gender</i>	<i>0.119</i>	Inclusion 2	0.204
Inclusion 1	0.153	Home Autonomy	-0.193

- Domain specific thus overarching attitudes to school were higher in the middle school at both time points, indicating a more positive school environment.

2a. Domain Specific Psychosocial Development was Similar Between Schools

- Unsupervised play (similar level between schools, time and locations of play increased by term three).
- Friendships (girls: fluid relationships, began to analyze others, falling out; boys: protective groups, more stable relationships, sport).
- Sexuality development (girls: moderated tolerated level of behaviour, boys & girls: 'speed dating').
- Cognitive increase (greater understanding of themselves and the world around them by term 3).

2b. But Maturity Self-Perceptions Were More Advanced in the Transition Sample

- Transfer was viewed as a status passage.
- *Maturity status markers* occurred in home, school, peer and physiological contexts, further defining the status passage.
- Experience of these markers increased adolescents' maturity self-perceptions and led to change in behaviour, self-perception and *expectations of school* for the transfer sample.

3. Experiences of Out-of-School Autonomy Contributed to Attitudinal Declines

- Home autonomy significantly predicted poorer attitudes to school (Beta -0.193, $t=-2.955$, $p<0.004$).
- Cluster analysis at time two revealed a greater number of well adjusted adolescents in the middle school, and more disengaged *autonomy seekers* in the secondary school.
- Matched case studies of autonomy seekers revealed that increasing desire for unsupervised play enhanced dislike of school.

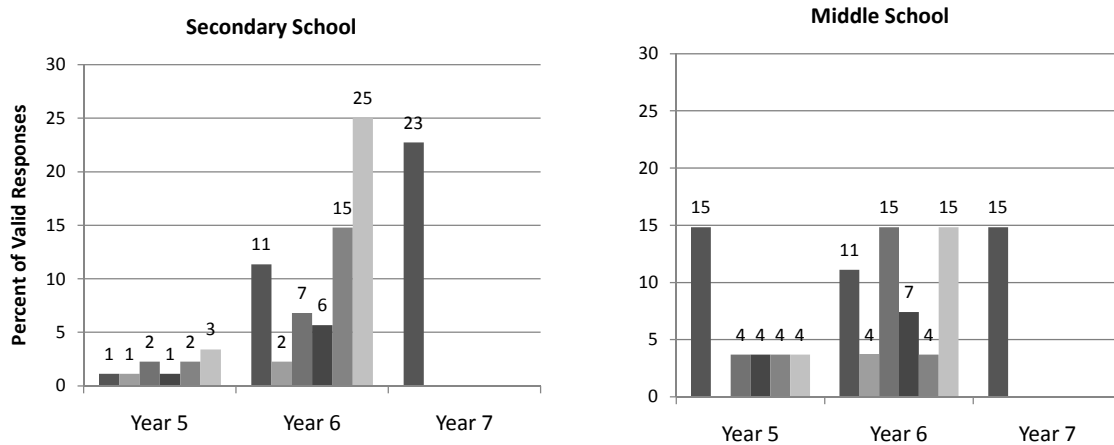
“School brings education, school does bring friends. It’s not as fun as you could have when you’re outside the school with your friends” *Stacy, age 12, June 2007*

4. The Transition Sample Reported More Developmental Concerns and Mental Health Problems

- Two girls at both schools were worried about their bodies changing. But only secondary school girls reported concern about their body image in front of peers.
- 5/9 secondary school pupils were anxious about the social consequences of growing up, whilst the middle school pupils (N.10) reported no social worries at all.
- Vulnerable boys at the secondary school had increasing adjustment problems, whilst vulnerable boys at the middle school experienced 'recovery'.

3. Even Though Reports of Pubertal Onset Were More Recent at the Secondary School

- A greater percentage of secondary school adolescents reported *on time* puberty around transition, and a greater percentage of middle school girls reported *early puberty* after transition.



Conclusions

Attitude to school

- Attitudes to school in early adolescence are mainly influenced by school environment but are also influenced by adolescents' experiences of out-of-school autonomy.

Stage-environment fit

- Transition 'speeds up' maturity self-perceptions by increasing the rate and salience of '*maturity status markers*' available to children in home, school and peer environments.
- Increased psychosocial maturity contributes to some children's dissatisfaction with post-transfer school environments.

And...

- School transfer at puberty is a potential risk factor for the onset of mental health problems.