

Systematic Review

The Importance of Social and Emotional Skills During Adolescence to Promote a Positive Social Identity: A Systematic Literature Review and Reflection Using Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory

Katherine Main ^{1,*}, Bobette D. Bouton ², Donna Pendergast ³ and Nicole Whitaker ⁴

- ¹ School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University, Academic 2 Building (L08), University Drive, Meadowbrook, QLD 4131, Australia
- ² Department of Teaching and Learning, College of Education, Austin Peay State University, 601 College Street, Clarksville, TN 37044, USA; boutonb@apsu.edu
- ³ Griffith Institute for Educational Research, Griffith University, Arts and Education 1 (G30), Parklands Drive, Southport, QLD 4222, Australia; d.pendergast@griffith.edu.au
- ⁴ Department of Education, Marietta College, 215 Fifth Street, Marietta, OH 45750, USA; nicolebwhitaker@gmail.com
- * Correspondence: k.main@griffith.edu.au

Abstract: Social identity in adolescence refers to the way young people define themselves in relation to the social groups they belong to, such as their peers, family, cultural or ethnic communities, gender, and sometimes subcultures. All of these areas of a person's identity are also influenced by the different contexts and the social discourses and expectations that are experienced. Social and emotional skills, competencies, or capacities are internal assets that can be learned and are linked to prosocial behavior and positive social identities. Developing strong social and emotional capabilities is particularly pertinent for young adolescents due to the convergence of developmental effects as they begin to form their sense of personal identity and shift to having a greater sense of independence. This paper presents the findings from a systematic literature review using PRISMA reporting guidelines of studies conducted between 2014 and 2024 that examined the links between social and emotional competencies and a young adolescent's social identity formation. Four education-focused databases were searched for peer-reviewed articles published in English. Results were mapped against CASEL's social and emotional skill sets. Very limited literature was found ($n = 6$) that explicitly addressed young adolescent identity formation and the need for social and emotional skills; however, key findings show that young adolescents utilize all five of CASEL's social and emotional skill sets to support the development of their social identity. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory is applied to the findings to consider the systemic influences. Questions for future research are also proposed.

Keywords: social and emotional skills; social identity; young adolescent; Bronfenbrenner; CASEL; puberty



Academic Editor: Pearl Subban

Received: 20 December 2024

Revised: 14 February 2025

Accepted: 16 February 2025

Published: 19 February 2025

Citation: Main, K., Bouton, B. D., Pendergast, D., & Whitaker, N. (2025). The Importance of Social and Emotional Skills During Adolescence to Promote a Positive Social Identity: A Systematic Literature Review and Reflection Using Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory. *Education Sciences*, 15(2), 258. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci15020258>

Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The Association for Middle-Level Education's position paper argues that to successfully educate young adolescents, schools need to be "responsible to the developmental needs and social identities of students" (Bishop & Harrison, 2021, p. 3). During adolescence, individuals experience significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes that prompt

them to explore and develop a sense of who they are. Social identity helps them understand their place in society and how they relate to others. Social identity theory is based on the premise that individuals define their own identities with regard to social groups they belong to. Personal and social identity are strongly interrelated with one's social identity identifying with and supporting their personal identity, such that much of their self-concept is derived from the social groups they belong to ([Branje et al., 2021](#)).

It is well-accepted that the spectrum of changes associated with puberty, including hormonal, physical, and social and emotional contribute to changes in the behavioral and neural correlates of social-emotional processing ([Steinberg, 2022](#)). This development is described by some as the second sensitive period of brain development, because of its intensity and long-lasting effects ([Cheng et al., 2024](#); [Kendricks et al., 2022](#); [Sisk & Gee, 2022](#)). Research has consistently shown that during this period of significant change, young adolescents have a strong desire to belong to a group as their allegiance moves away from the influence of their family towards their peer group and close friends. Young adolescents look to their peers for validation and acceptance with their peers becoming a major source of their identity formation as they seek to fit in and conform to social norms ([Albareello et al., 2021](#)). Social identity in adolescence refers to the way young people define themselves in relation to the social groups they belong to, such as their peers, family, cultural or ethnic communities, gender, and sometimes subcultures (e.g., athletes, gamers, musicians). All of these areas of a person's identity are also influenced by the different contexts and the social discourses and expectations that are experienced. For example, young adolescents engage in different roles such as being a student, a friend, a sibling, and a community member as they begin to develop an understanding of who they are in relation to the expectations of society ([Albareello et al., 2021](#)). Thus, social identity in adolescence is a dynamic process, often marked by a search for autonomy, self-expression, and belonging ([Zhang & Qin, 2023](#)).

As social identity is an integral part of adolescence, this paper examines the role of social and emotional capacities in adolescent identity formation through the key lenses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory model and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning's (CASEL) social and emotional skills framework. The paper also presents a systematic literature review to examine the current research base that explicitly explored the importance of building social-emotional skills during adolescence to promote and support positive social identities. By using the above lenses in combination, this paper is able to look at identity formation in adolescence in a more practical way and provide examples for future research in this area. The following section details the dynamic process of identity formation during adolescence.

2. Identity Formation

At the most basic level of expression, individuals draw on their unique and distinctive characteristics or personological variables ([Crocetti et al., 2023](#)) as a means for categorizing the self and formulating their person identities. Eight major identities are commonly used to describe how a person categorizes themselves at the individual level (i.e., unique and distinct level). These include ability, age, ethnicity, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status ([Muñoz, 2024](#)). The sets of meanings, values, and personal feelings tied to these identities provide stability and some choice in enactment across groups, roles, and situations.

"[T]he self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications" ([Stets & Burke, 2000](#), p. 224). In identity theory, this reflexive approach is called identification ([G. J. McCall & Simmons, 1978](#)). In social identity theory, this process is called self-categorization

(Reimer et al., 2022). It is through these core processes that individuals translate, enact, and embody cognitive and behavioral representations of their identities.

According to Burke and Stets (2022), in identity theory, the core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role or designated position (student identity, teacher identity, parent identity, including broader social categories such as gender). Here, identity formation involves the incorporation into the self, the meanings, and expectations associated with the role and its performance. In this tradition, “having a particular role identity means acting to fulfill expectations of that role, coordinating and negotiating interaction with role partners [counter roles], and manipulating the environment to control the resources for which the role has responsibility” (p. 226). Role-based identities emphasize personal uniqueness within relationships that are at once interrelated yet also accompanied by difference in perceptions and actions as relates to counter roles (Burke & Stets, 2022). Commitment to a role and evaluation of personal performance in the role influences feelings of self-esteem. Appraisals and approvals by others in the group influence self-efficacy. Negotiation and, at times, conflict are significant aspects of these interactional environments. Establishing a sense of control over such communications enhances personal feelings of competence and self-regulation.

In contrast to individual-level or role-based identities, social identities are formed by commitment to a collective of individuals who hold a common social identification, that is, they view themselves as members of the same social category (Burke & Stets, 2022). For example, sports club, fan-based club, generational group, relationship status group (married, single, divorced) political affiliation, social standing and so forth. These groups are characterized by uniformity and sameness (e.g., same perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors). There is a strong interplay between belongingness (i.e., depth and strength of ties to other members) and inclusiveness. Identity formation in social groups involves two significant processes: self-categorization/identification; for example, seeing the self as an embodiment of the in-group prototype and social comparison (Burke & Stets, 2022). This latter process involves categorizing persons similar to the self with the self, labeled the in-group, and persons different from the self as the out-group (Burke & Stets, 2022). Social categorization processes are mutually reinforced and maintained by social group members.

The social categorization process described above has a number of implications for identity formation in early adolescence. It is widely accepted that gender, racial/ethnic, and sexual orientation identity development are key aspects for young adolescence. Erikson’s (1963) adolescence stage of psychosocial development “identity versus role confusion” discusses that most adolescents will achieve some form of identity formation during this stage. Concerning gender identity development, the physical changes that occur during puberty can “affect self-perception and interpersonal relationships” (R. M. Jones et al., 2014b, p. 446), thus, reinforcing the social categorization “in-group”.

Concerning the racial/ethnic identity development, “Racial identity is a central part of the self-concept and a key developmental task for the adolescent period among racially and ethnically diverse youth” (Carter et al., 2017, p. 2173). Racial centrality refers to the extent to which an individual normatively defines him/herself regarding their racial group membership or the significance that individuals place on race (Sellers et al., 1997). Racial regard refers to individuals’ affective attitudes toward African Americans and is divided into two components: private regard and public regard. Private regard refers to the extent to which individuals feel positively or negatively about being a member of the African American community and public regard refers to the extent to which individuals feel that the broader society views the African American community positively or negatively (Sellers et al., 1998). Each of these specific definitions once again helps to unpack not just

how important cultural and ethnic identity is for young adolescents, but also how many components also need to be considered regarding social categorization.

Sexual orientation and how it contributes to identity development, specifically around adolescence, is yet another component of identity formation in young adolescents. According to [Bregman et al. \(2013\)](#), “Although well studied among heterosexual youth [identity development], it is only in the past couple of decades that there has been a growing interest in understanding psychosocial development, in general, and identity development, in particular, among sexual minority youth” (p. 418). Increasingly, research is being conducted regarding sexual orientation, specifically around the area of identity formation ([Baams & Kaufman, 2023](#); [Fish & Russell, 2020](#); [Porta et al., 2020](#)). An early study concerning lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth looked at the factors that can help these youth achieve a positive self-identity by examining “LGB identity in a person-centered, multi-dimensional manner, which allows for multiple patterns and individuality in identities” ([Bregman et al., 2013](#), p. 424). The study acknowledges that adolescence is not a “one size fits all” developmental period and must be considered from various viewpoints and individual experiences. With that said, the study found that one of the leading factors that contributed to positive personal identity for LGBTIQ+ youth is parental support or rejection ([Bregman et al., 2013](#)). This finding also supports earlier information by showing that adolescent social-emotional development depends on family and peer support. More recent studies have focused on specific aspects of identity formation as it pertains to sexual orientation, such as developmental milestones regarding sexual identity formation and gender diversity ([Baams & Kaufman, 2023](#)), sexual orientation and gender identity, and the contribution to mental health issues ([Fish & Russell, 2020](#)), and gender identity labels and the impacts that these have on adolescents ([Porta et al., 2020](#)). Each of these different aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity help to link the importance of social categorization to sexual orientation as well. These three very different, but equally important aspects of identity formation are limited in research but play a critical part in overall adolescent development.

Having a particular social identity means being at one with a certain group, being like others in the group, and seeing things from the group’s perspective ([Burke & Stets, 2022](#)). At the same time, multiple and intersecting identity domains (i.e., interconnected but unique) force attention towards organization and differentiation of the self in terms of relative importance, and, in this way, an identity hierarchy emerges ([Burke & Stets, 2022](#); [Stets & Burke, 2000](#)). According to [Brenner et al. \(2014\)](#), this hierarchy determines the likelihood that a person will embody a particular identity in a given situation. As pointed out by [Morris \(2013\)](#), the self-ranking of identities is significant because it demonstrates conscious attention to, and self-awareness of perceived commitment and/or costs associated with various identity formulations.

3. Social and Emotional Capabilities

Social and emotional skills, competencies, or capacities are internal assets that can be learned and are linked to prosocial behavior and positive social identities. Developing strong social and emotional capabilities is particularly pertinent for young adolescents due to the convergence of the developmental effects as they begin to form their sense of personal identity and shift to having a greater sense of independence.

There is a common misconception that young people naturally develop social and emotional skills as they interact with others. However, for some students, their everyday experiences with parents, families, teachers, and peers may not provide the opportunities necessary or may not be regulated in a way that supports the development of such skills. Social and emotional skills are ‘more malleable between early childhood and adolescence’

(OECD, 2015, p. 16) providing a window of opportunity at a time when the need to develop a more sophisticated skill set is necessary due to a range of developmental changes.

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2024), SEL leads to improved academic achievement by helping to create supportive relationships and opportunities to practice social, emotional, and cognitive skills across different situations (casel.org, accessed on 1 December 2024). CASEL also demonstrates through research that SEL contributes to overall mental health and safer schools by helping to create caring relationships and safe and supportive school environments that create a barrier against risks to mental health in young adolescents. SEL is effective across cultural contexts because it is not designed to be a “one-size-fits-all” approach but instead focuses on individual students and their own SEL needs. This focus on the social-emotional skills of an individual student helps to provide a link to identity formation in young adolescents by meeting students where they are.

The five CASEL competencies listed in Table 1 consist of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Each of these domains helps young adolescents with critical social skills while also aiding in their own personal identity formation. Self-awareness gives an opportunity for young adolescents to understand themselves both through their culture, beliefs about themselves, and their thoughts and feelings, and is an important step in their identity formation. Self-management can also assist young adolescents in overseeing their own thoughts and actions in order to help in both social situations and perseverance and grit. Social awareness moves away from the self and focuses on other’s perspectives and helps to create a sense of belonging. Relationship skills tie closely together with social awareness by creating a pathway to use social awareness to form relationships with others while maintaining personal identities. And finally, responsible decision making helps young adolescents to make good decisions for themselves by considering multiple perspectives. Each of these competencies helps in identify formation and creates a space for social-emotional growth.

Table 1. CASEL’s five core social and emotional competencies.

Competency	Explanation
Self-awareness	How we think about ourselves and who we are. It includes understanding our culture, our thoughts and feelings, and what we believe we are capable of. It is also about understanding how these things can influence our behaviors and beliefs.
Self-management	Managing our emotions, thoughts, and actions as we work toward goals. This includes coping with stress and anxiety, persevering through challenges, and developing a sense of personal agency (a willingness and ability to take action to make a difference).
Social awareness	How we understand others, how we learn to take on different perspectives and have empathy for people, even those who are different from us. It also includes understanding how what’s happening around us can influence us and how we create and feel a sense of belonging.
Relationship skills	How we get along with others and how we form lasting friendships and connections. This includes communicating clearly, solving problems together, managing conflicts and disagreements, and standing up for ourselves and others.
Responsible decision making	How we make positive and informed choices. This includes thinking about the consequences of our actions, being curious and open-minded to new perspectives and information, and identifying solutions that benefit us and the community.

Over the last decade, schools and school systems have adopted an increased focus on social and emotional learning (SEL) (Mahoney et al., 2021). More recently, in our post-pandemic world, this has accelerated due to the explosion in depression and disengagement from learning, including school refusal and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) by young adolescents (Lester & Michelson, 2024). Recognizing identity formation as a key goal during early adolescence, an overt focus on social and emotional learning and student well-being is a proactive way to address the academic and personal challenges facing young adolescents, placing school leaders and teachers at the front line of facilitating SEL in schools (Greenberg et al., 2017).

4. Social and Emotional Capabilities and Identity Formation

The Rand Report (Kennedy & Walls, 2024) highlights the link between specific social and emotional capabilities and identity formation for young adolescents and how schools can provide opportunities for students to develop these capabilities. Kennedy and Walls (2024) argue that several capabilities and practices contribute to students' social and emotional well-being, particularly for minoritized students, which can be inferred to play a role in identity formation. Four key practices are recommended; First, expressing voice and choice, where their report emphasizes the importance of providing young adolescents with opportunities to express their voice and make choices. This can empower students to explore and assert their identities. Second, the report highlights the crucial role of supportive relationships with adults and peers in promoting social and emotional well-being. These relationships can provide a sense of belonging and validation, which are important for identity development. Third, connecting students to a larger purpose by linking social and emotional well-being initiatives to postsecondary goals or explicitly supporting students to find a purpose in life can enhance the relevance of these skills and their impact for high school students. This can help students develop a sense of direction and identity as they transition into adulthood. Finally, building students' ability to navigate the complex social and emotional challenges they may encounter or experience. In their report, Kennedy and Walls (2024) acknowledge that young adolescents face various social and emotional challenges, such as anxiety, depression, and communication difficulties. Developing the capability to cope with these challenges can contribute to a stronger sense of self-efficacy and resilience, which are important for identity formation. Further, an emphasis on equity and inclusion suggests that social and emotional capabilities are particularly important for minoritized students, who may face additional challenges in forming their identities.

The five competencies outlined by CASEL can be used to help schools create a systematic implementation of SEL programs by using the following 10 indicators: (1) explicit SEL instruction; (2) SEL integration with academic instruction; (3) youth voice and engagement; (4) supportive school and classroom climates; (5) focus on adult SEL; (6) supportive discipline; (7) a continuum of integrated support; (8) authentic family partnerships; (9) aligned community partnerships; and (10) systems of continuous improvement (casel.org). These 10 indicators involve teachers, school administrators and staff, family and caregivers, and the community as they work together to support young adolescents to develop strong social and emotional capabilities. As such, each member of the young adolescent's life must participate to build strong social-emotional skills to benefit the overall identity formation of each student. Without support from all adults in the adolescent's life, focusing on the five CASEL competency areas of social identity formation could be limited.

In this study, we respond to the call to action by Brinegar et al. (2024) who have assembled a research agenda to address persistent and perennial concerns in middle-level education. One area of action is "In what ways do SEL programs support the development

of early adolescents' identity formation" (p. 45). As a starting point to this quandary, the research question driving this study is as follows:

What research has occurred to date that explicitly links the promotion/development of SEL skills and social identity during adolescence?

5. Theoretical Framing

For this study, we have adopted Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory as a lens for reflecting on the findings from the review. This is a highly regarded theoretical lens that is useful to consider the complexity of humans and their interactions with and in society. It was first theorized more than 50 years ago (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and despite a number of adaptations for situational applications, it remains relevant and insightful as a lens to explore aspects of human social and emotional development.

Typically depicted as a model, the theory has been applied extensively in psychology and education and provides a framework for representing the interrelated layers of systems influencing human development. Figure 1 provides a diagrammatic illustration of the model, with individuals sitting at the core. Bronfenbrenner's concepts of PPCT (Process, Person, Context, Time) provide further refinement for application of the model, and were added to the original model more recently (Hayes et al., 2022). Process refers to interactions; Person relates to the active role of individuals influence their development; Context accounts for the changing settings in which an individual operates; and Time refers to the chronological age of the individual. In this way, the model has greater specificity while being agile to suit changing situations. A recent adoption of Bronfenbrenner's theory to examine the development of students' sense of belonging to school (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022), reveals the most important practices and interactions that occur in the school microsystem that enhance students' sense of belonging. The study confirmed that the PPCT is evident across the system levels, with school microsystems playing a significant role in enhancing students' sense of belonging. We plan to take a similar approach in considering what the selected papers reveal in terms of influential factors identified in each paper across each of the system levels that shape SEL to create a positive identity.

The model describes five interconnected systems, presented in layers, much like those of an onion. Each layer represents a component of the ecosystem surrounding an individual, each influencing the person while interconnecting with each other. Working outwards, the systems are the microsystem (immediate context of the individual, for example, school, peers, family), mesosystem (influences from two or more aspects of the microsystems connecting, for example, parents and peer relationships), exosystem (informal and formal social and other structures impacting beyond the immediate individual, for example, neighbors, wider community, social services), macrosystem (broad socioeconomic, cultural attitudes, social and political context, for example, values, attitudes, culture), and chronosystem, (major historical events, life transitions, environmental events, for example, divorce, pandemic, war, death of loved one). The impacts on the individual are multi-directional, emphasizing that each system impacts on the others, and ultimately on the individual at the center. In this study, we call upon Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory as a lens to discuss the findings of the systematic literature review.

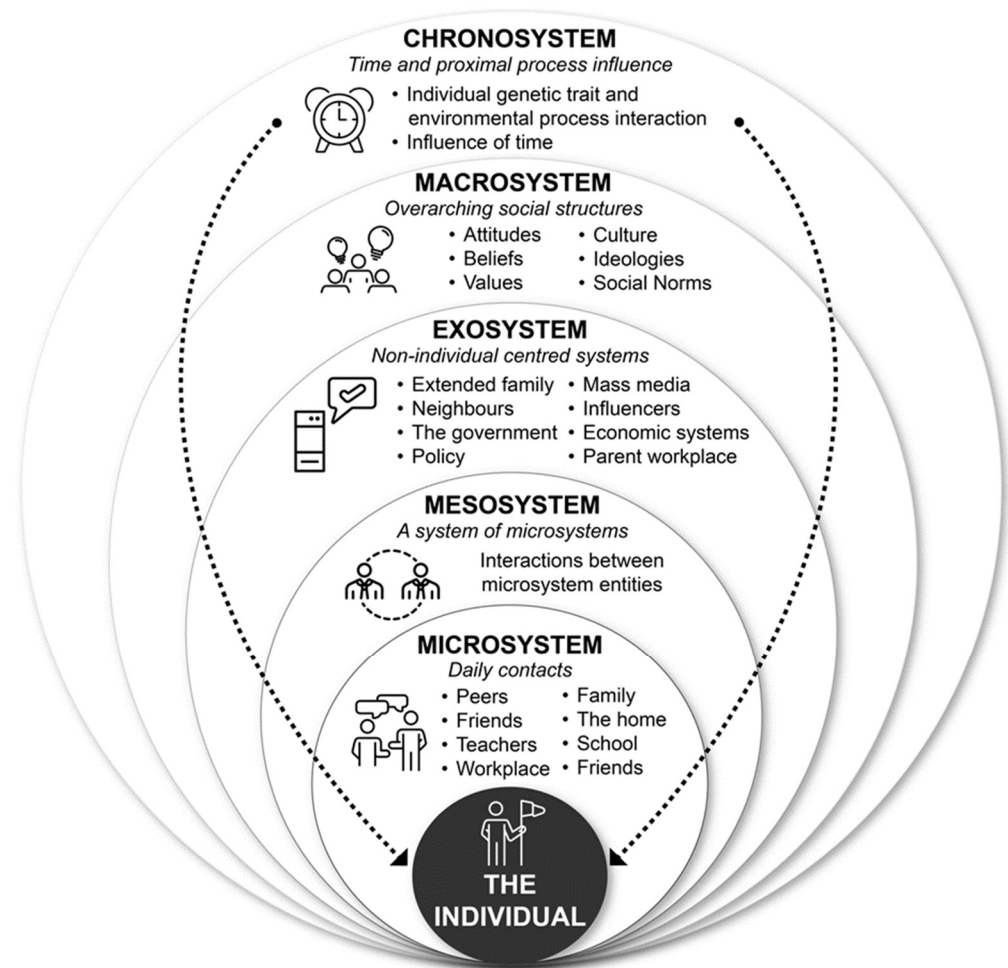


Figure 1. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory model.

6. Materials and Methods

There is increasing empirical evidence to demonstrate that identity formation is a significant component of young people's social proficiency and their decision making capacity across and within life domains e.g., education, interpersonal relationships, future vocation, and career (Albarelli et al., 2018). The interplay between the commitment to active and enduring life choices and this systematic literature review aimed to map key social-emotional competencies underlying identity formation and to identify socio-ecological dimensions that support or hinder this process. Outcomes from this investigation are expected to enhance understandings of identity-formation processes during this life stage and the implications for teachers' work are expected to be identified.

The systematic literature review undertaken for this paper examined the extent, range, and nature of research activity (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) concerned with the importance of building social-emotional skills during adolescence to promote and support positive social identities. The aim was to summarize findings from a heterogeneous body of peer-reviewed scholarship in response to the following question. What social-emotional skills are shown to support positive social identity in adolescence?

A systematic literature review methodology was used for this study because the aim was to focus on clarifying and synthesizing the breadth of empirical work related to social-emotional competencies and identity formation processes in adolescence. The aim was not to use specific types of publications (e.g., meta-analyses) or assess the quality of these studies (e.g., systematic review) (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Literature selection, data screening, and reporting stages followed procedures set out for the Preferred Reporting

Items for Systemic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews [PRISMA-ScR] (Tricco et al., 2018) and are discussed to follow.

7. Literature Search and Selection Process

The literature search for this paper was run in October 2024. Reviews of related research (e.g., personal identity literature) and initial manual searches of reference lists were conducted to refine the search terms, consider criteria for inclusion and exclusion, and to develop the final search string. Search strings were designed using four key concepts drawn from the research question: social-emotional competencies, identity, participant age group, and context. Closely related terms for each concept were tested and used in the final search string to avoid excluding relevant literature. The search string below was used to identify relevant papers: (social-emotional OR social emotional OR social OR emotional) AND (skills OR learning OR development OR competencies OR thinking OR intelligence) AND (identity OR self-concept OR self-perception) AND (adolescents OR teenagers OR young adolescents OR youth) AND (secondary education OR secondary school OR high school OR middle school OR junior secondary school).

The starting date range for this review was selected based on the timing of the release of the OECD’s 2015 report, which recognized social and emotional skills as being critical 21st century skills. Heck et al. (2023) noted that discipline-specific databases often outperform multi-disciplinary sources when conducting systematic literature reviews. Further, combining international and national databases is the most effective way to find relevant literature. The database search for this paper was conducted across four online databases: Education (ProQuest), A+ Education, SCOPUS, and PsycINFO. Restrictions were placed on publication year (2014–October 2024), and publication type (peer-reviewed).

These parameters were set in order to identify quality studies that reflected current trends in research related to social-emotional competences and adolescent identity formation. This procedure resulted in 281 publications. A first level screening of the publications by publication titles and abstracts was completed using the inclusion/exclusion criteria outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Included	Excluded
- Studies/research undertaken with secondary school students aged 12–18 years and focused on social-emotional competencies, identity formation and/or socio-ecological dimensions - Empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative or mixed method designs) published in peer-reviewed academic journals - Full-text journal articles published in English between 2014 and Oct 2024	- Studies/research not focused on secondary school students aged 12 to 18 years or social-emotional competencies, identity formation and/or socio-ecological dimensions - Not retrievable - Not written in the English language - Duplication - Unrelated topic

After the first level screening (title and abstract), 51 papers remained. Second level screening of these papers was undertaken by two of the authors and involved reviewing the full journal article to determine alignment of the scholarship to the overarching concepts and research intentions of the scoping review (i.e., focused on social-emotional competencies, identity formation and/or socio-ecological dimensions). A total of 17 papers

were retained for the analysis stage. Following a close analysis of the final 17 papers, only six articles explicitly explored/had empirical data linking social and emotional skills and positive identity formation. Figure 2 shows the flow of the screening process with numerical values.

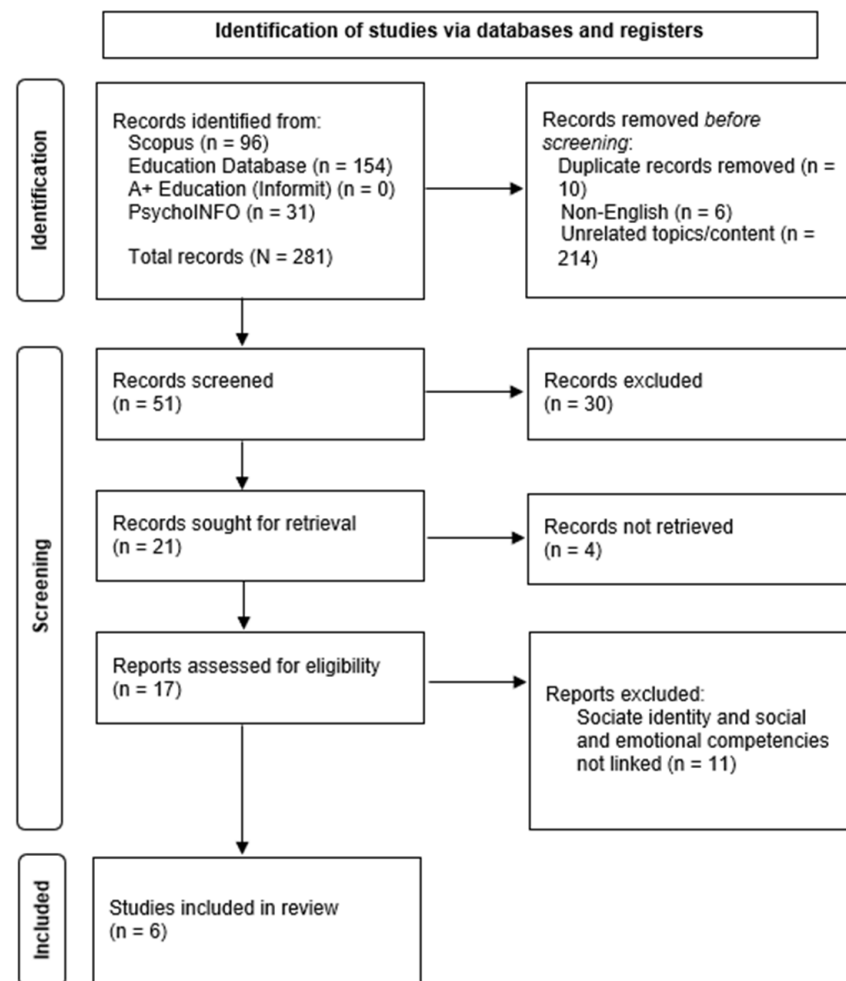


Figure 2. The flow of the screening process with numerical values.

8. Results

Table 3, below, outlines the final six articles, which form the analysis and discussion of this paper. Of the final six empirical papers (67%) that explicitly explored the role of social and emotional capabilities on a young adolescent's social identity formation, four (1, 2, 3, 5) were based on studies conducted in the United States, with one study (4) from Germany and one study (6) from Norway. Three (50%) of the studies (1, 3, 5) focused on racial identity as part of one's social identity, one study examined the development of students' prosocial identities (2), one study examined the challenges of international mobility on students' identity formation (4), and one study examined the impact of poor mental health on a student's social identity development (6).

Table 3. Articles that explicitly explored SE skills and positive identity formation.

#	Authors/Year	Journal	Title	Method	Findings
1	Griffin et al. (2022) (United States)	Urban Education	Do Coping Responses and Racial Identity Promote School Adjustment Among Black Youth? Applying an Equity-Elaborated Social-Emotional Learning Lens	Examines two equity-elaborated social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies among Black adolescents: coping responses to race-related stress at school (self-management) and racial identity (self-awareness), and their relation to school adjustment (school belonging, school valuing, cognitive strategy use). The sample included 151 Black high school students ($M_{age} = 16.42$; 52% female) from southeastern United States. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted.	The study revealed that racial centrality moderated the relationships between active coping and school valuing and active coping and cognitive strategy use. Findings support the value of using an equity-elaborated lens to understand the role of SEL competencies for Black youth's school adjustment.
2	J. N. J. N. Jones et al. (2014a) (United States)	Journal of Peace Education (Q2)	Promoting the development of moral identity, behavior, and commitment in a social action program	Involvement in social action and community service can promote the construction of prosocial identities and enduring patterns of civic behavior. This article explores this important process for youth that participate in the PeaceJam Ambassadors program. High school-aged 'PeaceJammers' study the lives of Nobel Peace laureates while creating projects to affect change in their local communities. Multiple methods were used to access youth perceptions, including surveys and interpretive interviews.	Participants reported high levels of indicators on personal and social change. Their narratives articulated salient influences on their identities and actions. They shared how advisors promote social identity, participation, and the development of moral identities. These findings add to a growing empirical literature on moral development and youth engagement in peace education and community transformation.
3	Wantchekon et al. (2021) (United States)	Developmental Psychology (Q1)	Adolescents' Ethnic-Racial Centrality Moderates Effect of School-Based Intervention on Ethnic-Racial Identity Exploration	The process of adolescents exploring and developing clarity about their ethnic racial identity (ERI) is an important developmental competency. However, the extent to which individuals view their ERI as central to their overall self-concept (i.e., ERI centrality) informs the degree to which they choose to explore their ERI, potentially moderating ERI development. Utilizing data from a randomized controlled trial of a school-based intervention focused on increasing adolescents' ERI exploration, the current study examined whether the intervention effect was moderated by adolescents' baseline ERI centrality.	Findings are consistent with notions from social identity theory as well as previous research that suggests that ethnic-racial theory (ERI) centrality encourages ERI exploration among adolescents.

Table 3. Cont.

#	Authors/Year	Journal	Title	Method	Findings
4	Greischel et al. (2018) (Germany)	Developmental Psychology (Q1)	Oh, the Places You'll Go! How International Mobility Challenges Identity Development in Adolescence	This study investigated the effects of international mobility on adolescent identity development and explored the mediating role of changes in social relationships. We implemented a prospective comparative study design including 457 sojourners (German high school exchange students) and 284 non-sojourners (German adolescents who remained in Germany; 73.3% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 15.63$, $SD = 0.78$), and measured students' identity commitment and reconsideration on three occasions over a period of 18 months. The measurements were taken 6 weeks prior to departure (Time [T]1), 7 months after the sojourn experience had begun (T2), and 7 months post-return (T3), thereby covering both central phases in the context of international sojourning: the transition abroad and the reentry transition. Two identity domains (i.e., Friends and Home) were examined.	Longitudinal latent change analyses indicated both transition-specific and domain-specific identity processes. Sojourners showed a relative decrease in friends commitment and a corresponding increase in friends reconsideration over time. Although pronounced increases in home commitment were found for sojourners during the transition abroad, their home commitment declined throughout the reentry transition. Inverse trends were recorded for sojourners' home reconsideration trajectories. Multiple mediation analyses revealed sojourn-related changes in subjective closeness toward parents but not friends as a mechanism that partially explained the effects of international mobility on identity development. For future directions, we discuss the role of life events and social relationships as inalienable contexts for identity dynamics.
5	Derlan et al. (2016) (United States)	Journal of Adolescence (Q1)	Brief report: Contextual predictors of African American adolescents' ethnic-racial identity affirmation-belonging and resistance to peer pressure.	The current study examined whether contextual factors (i.e., familial cultural socialization, percentage of same-ethnicity friends in high school, and neighborhood ethnic-racial composition) predicted ethnic-racial identity affirmation-belonging and, in turn, resistance to peer pressure to engage in problem behavior. Participants were 250 African American adolescents ($M_{\text{age}} = 15.57$ years; $SD = 1.22$). African American youths' positive development.	Consistent with ecological theory, findings indicated that familial cultural socialization and percentage of same-ethnicity friends predicted greater ethnic-racial identity affirmation-belonging. Furthermore, consistent with notions from social identity theory, youth who reported higher ethnic-racial identity affirmation-belonging also reported greater resistance to peer pressure. Findings highlight the significance of the family and school context, as well as the importance of ethnic-racial identity affirmation-belonging.
6	Wiiium et al. (2021) (Norway)	Developmental Psychology (Q1)	The Importance of Developmental Assets to Mental Health in Norwegian Youth	In the present study, we examined the importance of developmental assets to prolonged sadness (i.e., being sad most of the time or all the time for no reason in the last month) and a suicide attempt. Cross-sectional data on items measuring developmental assets as well as prolonged sadness and suicide attempts were collected from high school students in Norway ($N = 591$, 55% girls). Independent <i>t</i> -tests were conducted.	The findings indicated that youth with poor mental health reported less developmental assets relative to their peers who did not report such problems. In logistic regression, asset categories, such as positive identity and personal assets (social competence), were significantly associated with poor mental health (especially prolonged sadness) after adjusting for other asset categories and demographic factors, such as age, sex, and parents' educational background. While more research on factors that can promote youth mental health is needed, our findings suggest that policies and programs that ensure that youth have access to the necessary developmental resources and opportunities may also be empowering youth, enhancing their mental health, and consequently, facilitating their active involvement in their community.

Table 4 (below) presents an analysis of each of the six papers through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's theoretical lens. Each paper was audited using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model as a frame to identify the factors each paper presents as relevant in that study for the development of social and emotional skills, according to the system level. That is, each of CASEL's five social and emotional competency groups (i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making) are shown to be utilized within the informing literature. Within these studies, the need for well-developed SE skills were most prominent at the micro and meso levels.

The analysis presented in Table 4 demonstrates how Bronfenbrenner's theoretical lens can be used as a comprehensive framework for understanding human development within multiple, interacting environmental systems. It revealed the nature of the influencing factors evident in each publication by mapping the key social-emotional competencies underlying identity formation and identifying the socio-ecological dimensions that support or hinder this process. Insights into Bronfenbrenner's concepts of PPCT (Process, Person, Context, Time), while not assessed in this review due to the inconsistency and inadequacy of the detail provided, are evident in the mapping undertaken. When mapped against the micro (the immediate environment, including the family, school, and local community) and meso (the interaction between two microsystems, such as the relationship between parents and teachers) levels, the depth and variety of social and emotional skills were more pronounced within these system levels compared with other systems levels, a finding that is consistent in the study conducted by [El Zaatari and Maalouf \(2022\)](#).

A further analysis of the articles showed how the SE skills were employed by the participants and supported their development of a positive social identity. Table 5 provides more detail about which SE skills were most prominent within the articles and how they related within the context of the studies and the social identity development of the participants.

Table 4. Application of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model as a frame to consider the importance of social and emotional skills identified in each article.

Bronfenbrenner’s System Level	1 Griffin et al. (2022)	2 J. N. Jones et al. (2014a)	3 Wantchekon et al. (2021)	4 Greischel et al. (2018)	5 Derlan et al. (2016)	6 Wiiium et al. (2021)
Micro—daily contacts - Family and the home - School, friends and peers - Teachers - Workplace	Managing the stress of racism	- Personal and moral identity - Moral awareness	Self-affective meaning ascribed to ethnic-racial identity	- Host family - New friends in host country - School environment	- Family (cultural socialization) - Peers (same ethnicity friends) - School context (ethnic/racial mix)	- Mental health - Commitment to learning - Positive values - Positive identity - Empowerment - Constructive use of time
Meso—a system of microsystems The interaction between each entity within the microsystem	- Racial group membership - Race-related stress - Anti-Black racism in schools - Strategies to teach and encourage students to engage in active coping strategies against racism and racial discrimination	- Social identity - Sense of agency	- The Identity Project intervention for ethnic-racial identity (ERI) development - Social group membership	- Host family and the school - Relationships with friends from home and new friends in the host country - Communication with parents back home	Family and cultural links to the school	- Social competencies when interacting with others - Support - Boundaries and expectations
Exo—a system centered around the individual, extended family and neighbors - The government, curriculum and policy - Mass media - Economic systems - Parent/guardian workplace	- Racial discrimination - Urban racial discrimination	- Moral and community action - Community awareness and service	Racialized society	- Parents, workplace - School exchange organization - Policies of both home and host country	- Neighborhood ethnic-racial composition (exposure to cultural resources and role models) - Media representations of African Americans - Policies impacting access to resources and opportunities	- Experience of assets - Internal and external assets
Macro—overarching cultures and social structures - Attitudes, beliefs, and values - Culture - Ideologies	- Institutional racism - Equity strategies - Race centrality and racial identity	- Role identities - Moral identities - Social Identities - Community service	- Institutional racism - Pivotal socio-cultural events, e.g., election of President Obama	- Cultural norms and expectations of both host and home countries - Societal attitudes towards international mobility - Global political climate	- Societal attitudes towards race and ethnicity - Prevalence of racial discrimination - Representation of African Americans in media and popular culture	Norwegian youth culture
Chrono—the influence of time and proximal processes - Interaction between an individual’s genetic traits and environmental processes - Influence on the time in which an individual lives	Race centrality and racial identity	Personal, social and moral identities	Race centrality and racial identity	- Student’s age at time of the exchange - Historical context of their experience (home v host country) - Duration of overseas exchange	Developmental characteristics and historical contexts that influence identity formation	Adolescent increased risk of mental health

Table 5. Details of which SE skills were most prominent within the articles and how they related within the context of the studies.

	1 Griffin et al. (2022)	2 J. N. Jones et al. (2014a)	3 Wantchekon et al. (2021)	4 Greischel et al. (2018)	5 Derlan et al. (2016)	6 Wiiium et al. (2021)
Social and emotional skills	Self-Awareness - Racial identity—understanding the importance of race to one’s self-concept Self-Management - Coping responses (intentional efforts) to race-related stress at school Social Awareness - Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones - Demonstrating cultural competency Relationship skills - Seeking emotional or behavioral assistance from others to cope with a problem Responsible decision making - Identifying solutions for personal and social problems	Self-Awareness - Moral identity—aligning themselves with moral values (linking feelings, values, and thoughts) - Developing self-efficacy and self-esteem through involvement in program Self-Management - Taking personal responsibility to take action and make a difference Social Awareness - Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones - Developing a deeper sense of empathy through social connection and service - Demonstrating Cultural Competency Relationship skills - Social identity and belonging through social connection (shared goals, service experiences, sense of community) - Making and sustaining healthy relationships Responsible decision making - Aligning themselves with moral values and making ethical decisions	Self-Awareness - Racial identity—understanding the importance of race to one’s self-concept (linking feelings, values, and thoughts) Self-Management - Coping responses (intentional efforts) to resist race-related peer pressure at school Social Awareness - Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones - Demonstrating cultural competency Relationship skills - Seeking emotional or behavioral support from familial cultural socialization on ethnic-racial identity. Responsible decision making - Identifying solutions for personal and social problems	Self-Awareness - Self-reflection to evaluate one’s values and beliefs across different cultures/ contexts - Ability to adjust to changing social contexts Self-Management - Coping responses (intentional efforts) to race-related stress at school - Reverse culture shock when they return home requires resilience, coping skills, and emotional regulation Social Awareness - Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones - Demonstrating cultural competency Relationship skills - Navigating changing social relationships including reverse culture shock when they return home - Emotional connection and trust with parents/family to support them through changing social and cultural contexts acts as a buffer during change. Responsible decision making - Identifying solutions for personal and social problems	Self-Awareness - Racial identity—understanding the importance of race to one’s self-concept (linking feelings, values, and thoughts) Self-Management - Coping responses (intentional efforts) to resist race-related peer pressure at school Social Awareness - Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones - Demonstrating cultural competency Relationship skills - Seeking emotional or behavioral support from familial cultural socialization on ethnic-racial identity. Responsible decision making - Identifying solutions for personal and social problems	Self-Awareness - Positive identity—feeling good about oneself, having control over one’s life and future, and having a sense of purpose (self-esteem, self-efficacy, and goal setting). - Developing self-efficacy and self-esteem through involvement in program Self-Management - Taking personal responsibility (sense of agency) to take action and make a difference as a resource in the community - Feeling empowered—planning and resistance skills. Social Awareness - Developing a deeper sense of empathy through social connection and service - Demonstrating cultural competency Relationship skills - Supportive family and school climate; supportive adults outside of relationships - Making and sustaining healthy relationships; communication and cooperation skills Responsible decision making - Decision making including negotiation skills and refusal skills

9. Discussion

During adolescence, young people are exploring and building their emerging and multiple identities at a time of increasingly complex roles and social reorientation (i.e., increased connection to peers). It is critical to understand how best to support adolescents to develop the necessary skills to navigate the complexities of these social changes as they also begin to commit to personal values and beliefs. This systematic literature review points to the lack of literature that explicitly examines the importance of a young person's social and emotional development during puberty and the significance of these skills in supporting their identity formation.

With a growing literature base demonstrating that identity formation is a significant component of the social proficiency and decision-making capacity for young adolescents across and within life domains (Albarelli et al., 2018), the different levels of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory provide a lens to frame current and future research and emphasize which social and emotional skills are necessary to successfully navigate social situations within and across each level. As outlined in Table 5, despite the scarcity of literature identified, all papers clearly demonstrated the need for a broad range of skills at each level of Bronfenbrenner's model. Furthermore, with social and emotional skills being competencies and not traits, understanding *how* to explicitly teach these skills within different contexts to support students is also critical. However, what was also highlighted within the studies by Griffin et al. (2022), Wantchekon et al. (2021), and Derlan et al. (2016) was the concept of intersectionality of the multiple identities that students hold. They demonstrate the need for a greater focus on not just social and emotional skills but transformative SEL to address issues around power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, social justice, and empowerment. The study by Greischel et al. (2018) also recognizes the need for studies to embrace the intersectionality of the multiple identities students hold related to gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

Despite the limited literature available and their disparate topics and contexts, the articles in this systematic review demonstrated that across all levels of Bronfenbrenner's biological theory, participants were required to access one or more of CASEL's social and emotional competency sets. For example, young people needed a high level of self-awareness to be able to understand their position within the world around them and the importance or influence of their ethnic/racial or cultural backgrounds, their moral values, or their mental health on their personal identities (see Tables 4 and 5). This illustrates the movement across and within the various systems levels as individuals establish their identity. It also links with Bronfenbrenner's concepts of PPCT, acknowledging that this is not static, but a dynamic ecosystem, and the systems within operate within these contextual shifts.

These studies also emphasized the influence of various environmental factors on individual development. For example, in Greischel et al.'s (2018) study on international mobility, students needed to have self-awareness to be able to evaluate their values and beliefs and how these changed or were stable across different cultures/contexts, and social awareness as they learned the social norms (including those norms that were unjust). This awareness enabled them to adjust to changing social contexts as they moved from their home country to another country and then home again. A key finding was the experience of reverse culture shock as these students returned to their home country. This experience required them to have strong coping skills, emotional regulation, and resilience as well demonstrating strong relationship skills to build the emotional connections necessary with their parents and family to support them through the changing social and cultural contexts. These students were also required to exhibit self-management skills as they encountered

race-related stressors at school and to exhibit responsible decision making skills as they identified and implemented solutions for personal and social problems.

As noted above, 50% of the studies ($n = 3$) were focused on racial identity. Although the literature consistently suggests that socioemotional assets and skills support academic learning and success, it rarely considers the realities of racism and race-related stress in the lives of Black students. The transformative social and emotional learning approach proposed by Jagers et al. (2019) adopts an equity-elaborated lens. As such, it “incorporates issues like power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, social justice, and empowerment into social and emotional learning research and practice (Griffin et al., 2022, p. 199). Traditional social and emotional learning conceptualizes self-management as the ability to manage emotions and behaviors to achieve goals. In contrast, transformative social and emotional learning incorporates racial identity as a key aspect of self-awareness and conceptualizes self-management as the ability to cope with racial stress and regulate emotions and behaviors to achieve goals. Within these studies (1, 2, and 6), only one (Griffin et al., 2022) referred to transformative social and emotional learning when examining social and emotional learning and the identity formation of young adolescents whose racial background was a critical aspect of their sense of self. With evidence around the importance of transformative social and emotional learning approaches for marginalized young adolescents, targeted professional development for those tasked with supporting these young people should be considered. The inclusion of transformative SEL approaches that embed the teaching of SEL to promote equity, foster critical thinking, and empower students to challenge systemic inequalities can be achieved through culturally responsive teaching and SEL integration (Ball & Ladson-Billings, 2020). Other strategies to promote transformative SEL include student-led projects that focus on community issues such as addressing bullying or promoting mental health awareness within their school (Schweizer, 2024), the use of Paulo Freire’s work on critical pedagogy with a focus on critical consciousness (see, for example, Macrine, 2020), and SEL and community engagement models which integrate community service and equity-focused activities to align with transformative SEL objectives (C. S. McCall et al., 2023).

The outcomes of this study align with broader theories of adolescent development and social and emotional learning frameworks. However, it also diverges and extends the current research and stresses the need for more studies that explicitly link SEL skills with social identity, the need for transformative SEL approaches to be used, and a greater awareness of the complexity and intersectionality of identities through longitudinal research. The implication for all levels of education is to examine their curriculum and consider how best to integrate SEL into school curricula to support identity formation while also being cognizant of and addressing the unique identity challenges faced by marginalized or underrepresented adolescent groups through programs that incorporate transformative SEL programs.

Drawing back to the original research question, “What social-emotional skills are shown to support positive social identity in adolescence?”, our review has shown that young adolescents require a broad range of social and emotional skills across the five key domains (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making) outlined by CASEL (2024) regardless of the context or focus of the study. The identity formation processes for young adolescents are complex and require support and explicit guidance from parents, family, teachers, and others who have a vested interest in the positive life trajectories for these young people.

10. Limitations

Limitations of this study:

- This study focused on education databases, which resulted in only six articles that explicitly explored the relationship between social and emotional skills and identity formation within an education context. A broader search across other disciplines may increase the number of articles identified and the generalizability of findings across diverse populations or contexts.
- Within the identified studies, there is a geographical bias that may not capture potential cultural and systemic differences in other parts of the world.
- The study's reliance on these few studies may emphasize short-term findings rather than providing insights into the longer-term impacts of social and emotional learning on identity formation.
- This study only included studies that were published in English, within a certain date range, and those studies explicitly focused on young adolescents. This limited focus may have inadvertently excluded relevant research.

11. Points to Ponder

Using the results of the literature review, this paper outlines how the key social and emotional competences in CASEL's framework are needed in aiding identity development and how Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory model can be used to show where and how individuals (i.e., peers, teachers, parents, etc.) can influence adolescents' identity development. This study used the above information to outline beginning steps that educators, policymakers, and parents can begin to take using the focus questions below to guide future research. The hope of this paper is to encourage all involved in young adolescent lives to understand the importance of identity development and the components needed for its growth.

Future research needs to embrace the concept of intersectionality by investigating the multiple identities that students hold. This means considering how factors like gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity intersect and influence their identity development during adolescence. Further research is also necessary to understand the importance of a well-developed suite of social and emotional skills to enable young people to navigate the complexities of their developing identity and the intersectionality of what can sometimes be conflicting factors. A more holistic understanding of how best to support young adolescents in developing a positive personal identity can be achieved by examining these intersecting identities and the social and emotional skills necessary at and within each of the levels within Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory model.

To better understand the lasting effects of SEL programs on identity development, longitudinal research is needed. These studies should track how connections between SEL competencies, coping methods, identity formation, and school adjustment shift over time for diverse students.

12. Focus Questions for Future Research

1. Schools and Educators
 - a. What curriculum development is needed for both schools, teachers, and parents to help young adolescents develop the five CASEL skill sets listed above?
 - b. How can the need for more/better young adolescent identity development through social-emotional skills be communicated to all individuals (teachers, parents, schools, communities) who work with young adolescents? How can this information be disseminated more broadly?
 - c. What are the most effective ways to integrate SEL into school curricula to support identity formation equitably across diverse student populations?

- d. How can SEL programs be tailored for adolescents experiencing adverse childhood events or those in under-resourced schools?
 - e. How can SEL programs be adapted to address the unique identity challenges faced by marginalized or underrepresented adolescent groups?
 - f. How do universal social-emotional learning (SEL) programs compare with targeted interventions designed for specific student groups in terms of equity and effectiveness, and what are the most appropriate approaches for different contexts to ensure all students receive the support they need?
2. Transformative SEL
 - a. How effective are transformative SEL programs, which incorporate equity, social justice, and systemic awareness, in supporting the identity development of marginalized adolescents?
 - b. How can SEL programs integrate critical pedagogy to empower students to address systemic inequalities and promote community engagement?
 - c. How effective are social action programs in fostering positive social change and civic engagement through social-emotional learning (SEL) interventions, and how do these programs contribute to adolescents' moral identity development and prosocial behavior?
 3. Intersectionality
 - a. How can the current five CASEL skill sets be applied equitably to more diverse student populations?
 - b. How do the intersectional identities of Black youth, including factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, interact with race to influence their experiences with social-emotional learning (SEL) and identity development?
 - c. How do intersecting identities (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability) influence the relationship between SEL and identity formation in adolescence?
 - d. What role do cultural and religious beliefs play in shaping SEL competencies and their impact on identity formation in various regions and populations?
 - e. How do specific developmental assets contribute to or protect against poor mental health in youth, particularly those from marginalized communities, and how can these assets be leveraged to promote positive identity formation and overall well-being?
 4. International and Cross-cultural Comparisons
 - a. How do SEL and identity-formation processes differ in adolescents across cultures with varying social norms, education systems, and community structures?
 - b. What lessons can be learned from international SEL programs to inform global best practices in adolescent identity development?
 - c. How do global or local historical events (e.g., pandemics, political upheaval) impact SEL competencies and identity development in adolescents?

Author Contributions: K.M., B.D.B., D.P., and N.W. all contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, data curation, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author(s).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

References

- Albareello, F., Crocetti, E., & Rubini, M. (2018). I and us: A longitudinal study on the interplay of personal and social identity in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(4), 689–702. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Albareello, F., Crocetti, E., & Rubini, M. (2021). Developing identification with humanity and social well-being through social identification with peer groups in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(6), 1157–1172. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Arksey, H., & O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping studies: Towards a methodological framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 19–32. [CrossRef]
- Baams, L., & Kaufman, T. M. L. (2023). Sexual orientation and gender identity/expression in adolescent research: Two decades in review. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 60(7), 1004–1019. [CrossRef]
- Ball, A. F., & Ladson-Billings, G. (2020). Educating teachers for the 21st century: Culture, reflection, and learning. In N. S. Nasir, C. D. Lee, R. Pea, & M. McKinney De Royston (Eds.), *Handbook of the cultural foundations of learning* (pp. 387–403). Routledge.
- Bishop, P., & Harrison, L. (2021). *The successful middle school: This we believe*. BookBaby.
- Branje, S., De Moor, E. L., Spitzer, J., & Becht, A. I. (2021). Dynamics of identity development in adolescence: A decade in review. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 31(4), 908–927. [CrossRef]
- Bregman, H. R., Malik, N. M., Page, M. J. L., Makynen, E., & Lindahl, K. M. (2013). Identity profiles in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth: The role of family influences. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 42(3), 417–430. [CrossRef]
- Brenner, P. S., Serpe, R. T., & Stryker, S. (2014). The causal ordering of prominence and salience in identity theory: An empirical examination. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 77(3), 231–252. [CrossRef]
- Brinegar, K. M., Moulton, M., Falbe, K. N., Rintamaa, M., & Ellerbrock, C. R. (2024). Navigating opportunities for middle level education research: The MLER SIG research agenda. *RMLE Online*, 47(8), 25–53. [CrossRef]
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press. [CrossRef]
- Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2022). *Identity theory: Revised and expanded*. Oxford University Press.
- Carter, R., Seaton, E. K., & Rivas-Drake, D. (2017). Racial identity in the context of pubertal development: Implications for adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, 53(11), 2170–2181. [CrossRef]
- CASEL. (2024). *Advancing social and emotional learning*. Available online: <https://casel.org/> (accessed on 1 December 2023).
- Cheng, T. W., Mills, K. L., & Pfeifer, J. H. (2024). Revisiting adolescence as a sensitive period for sociocultural processing. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 164, 105820.
- Crocetti, E., Albareello, F., Meeus, W., & Rubini, M. (2023). Identities: A developmental social-psychological perspective. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 34(1), 161–201. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Derlan, C. L., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Updegraff, K. A., & Jahromi, L. B. (2016). Mothers' characteristics as predictors of adolescents' ethnic-racial identity: An examination of Mexican-origin teen mothers. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 22(3), 453–459. [CrossRef]
- El Zaatari, W., & Maalouf, I. (2022). How the bronfenbrenner bio-ecological system theory explains the development of students' sense of belonging to school? *Sage Open*, 12(4). [CrossRef]
- Erikson, E. H. (1963). *Childhood and society* (2nd ed.). Norton.
- Fish, J. N., & Russell, S. T. (2020). Sexual orientation and gender identity change efforts are unethical and harmful. *American Journal of Public Health*, 110(8), 1113–1114. [CrossRef]
- Greenberg, M. T., Domitrovich, C. E., Weissberg, R. P., & Durlak, J. A. (2017). Social and emotional learning as a public health approach to education. *The Future of Children*, 27(1), 13–32. [CrossRef]
- Greischel, H., Noack, P., & Neyer, F. J. (2018). Oh, the places you'll go! How international mobility challenges identity development in adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 54(11), 2152–2165. [CrossRef]
- Griffin, C. B., Gray, D., Hope, E., Metzger, I. W., & Henderson, D. X. (2022). do coping responses and racial identity promote school adjustment among black youth? Applying an equity-elaborated social-emotional learning lens. *Urban Education*, 57(2), 198–223. [CrossRef]
- Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2022). *Introducing bronfenbrenner: A guide for practitioners and students in early years education*. Routledge.
- Heck, T., Keller, C., & Rittberger, M. (2023). Coverage and similarity of bibliographic databases to find most relevant literature for systematic reviews in education. *International Journal on Digital Libraries*, 25, 365–376. [CrossRef]
- Jagers, R. J., Rivas-Drake, D., & Williams, B. (2019). Transformative social and emotional learning (SEL): Toward SEL in service of educational equity and excellence. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 162–184. [CrossRef]

- Jones, J. N., Warnaar, B. L., Bench, J. H., & Stroup, J. (2014a). Promoting the development of moral identity, behavior, and commitment in a social action program. *Journal of Peace Education*, 11(2), 225–245. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Jones, R. M., Dick, A. J., Coyl-Shepherd, D. D., & Ogletree, M. (2014b). Antecedents of the male adolescent identity crisis: Age, grade, and physical development. *Youth & Society*, 46(4), 443–459. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Kendricks, D. R., Boomhower, S. R., & Newland, M. C. (2022). Adolescence as a sensitive period for neurotoxicity: Lifespan developmental effects of methylmercury. *Pharmacology Biochemistry and Behavior*, 217, 173389. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Kennedy, K., & Walls, J. (2024). *Social-emotional well-being for high school students: Guidance for school and system policy and practice. research report. RR-A3377-1*. RAND Corporation.
- Lester, K. J., & Michelson, D. (2024). Perfect storm: Emotionally based school avoidance in the post-COVID-19 pandemic context. *BMJ Mental Health*, 27(1), e300944. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#) [\[PubMed Central\]](#)
- Macrine, S. L. (2020). *Critical pedagogy in uncertain times: Hope and possibilities*. Springer Nature.
- Mahoney, J. L., Weissberg, R. P., Greenberg, M. T., Dusenbury, L., Jagers, R. J., Niemi, K., Schlinger, M., Schlund, J., Shriver, T. P., VanAusdal, K., & Yoder, N. (2021). Systemic social and emotional learning: Promoting educational success for all preschool to high school students. *American Psychologist*, 76(7), 1128–1142. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- McCall, C. S., Romero, M. E., Yang, W., & Weigand, T. (2023). A call for equity-focused social-emotional learning. *School Psychology Review*, 52(5), 586–607. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- McCall, G. J., & Simmons, J. L. (1978). *Identities and interactions: An examination of human associations in everyday life* (rev. ed.). The Free Press. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Morris, R. C. (2013). Identity salience and identity importance in identity theory. *Current Research in Social Psychology*, 21(8), 23–36.
- Muñoz, F-F. (2024). The coevolution of technology, markets, and culture: The challenging case of AI. *Review of Evolutionary Political Economy*, 5(3), 511–533. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- OECD. (2015). *Skills for social progress: The power of social and emotional skills*. OECD Publishing. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Porta, C. M., Gower, A. L., Brown, C., Wood, B., & Eisenberg, M. E. (2020). Perceptions of sexual orientation and gender identity minority adolescents about labels. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 42(2), 81–89. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Reimer, N. K., Schmid, K., Hewstone, M., & Al Ramiah, A. (2022). Self-categorization and social identification: Making sense of us and them. In *Theories in social psychology* (2nd ed., pp. 273–295). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Schweizer, J. (2024). *Increasing agency for marginalized high school students through transformative social-emotional learning* [Doctoral dissertation, Northeastern University].
- Sellers, R. M., Rowley, S. A. J., Chavous, T. M., Shelton, J. N., & Smith, M. A. (1997). Multidimensional inventory of black identity: A preliminary investigation of reliability and construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73(4), 805–815. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Sellers, R. M., Smith, M. A., Shelton, J. N., Rowley, S. A. J., & Chavous, T. M. (1998). Multidimensional model of racial identity: A reconceptualization of African American racial identity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2(1), 18–39. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Sisk, L. M., & Gee, D. G. (2022). Stress and adolescence: Vulnerability and opportunity during a sensitive window of development. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 44, 286–292. [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#)
- Steinberg, L. (2022). *Adolescence* (13th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63(3), 224–237. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Tricco, A. C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K. K., Colquhoun, H., Levac, D., Moher, D., Peters, M. D. J., Horsley, T., Weeks, L., Hempel, S., Akl, E. A., Chang, C., McGowan, J., Stewart, L., Hartling, L., Aldcroft, A., Wilson, M. G., Garrity, C., . . . Straus, S. E. (2018). PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and explanation. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 169(7), 467–473. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wantchekon, K. A., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Sladek, M. R., McDermott, E. R., & Updegraff, K. A. (2021). Adolescents' ethnic-racial centrality moderates the effect of school-based intervention on ethnic-racial identity exploration. *Developmental Psychology*, 57(3), 432–442. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wiiium, N., Beck, M., & Ferrer-Wreder, L. (2021). The importance of developmental assets to mental health in Norwegian youth. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 687537. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Zhang, Y., & Qin, P. (2023). Comprehensive review: Understanding adolescent identity. *Studies in Psychological Science*, 1(2), 17–31. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.

Copyright of Education Sciences is the property of MDPI and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.