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# A Qualitative Content Analysis of Identity Development Indicators in Gap Year Alumni Survey Responses

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IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA ALUMNI SURVEY RESPONSES

A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS  
IN GAP YEAR ALUMNI SURVEY RESPONSES

by

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Presented to the Doctoral Department

and College of Education, George Fox University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education



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"A QCA OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN GAP YEAR ALUMNI SURVEY RESPONSES," a Doctoral research project prepared by ELISABETH MOREAU in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership.

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IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

**Abstract**

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

Emerging adolescence is a stage of development between adolescence and adulthood when young people are most concerned with personal identity development. During this time of life, young people have several postsecondary education choices; such as attending college, entering the work force immediately, or embracing an alternative educational experience such as a Gap Year. The Gap Year originated in Great Britain and is gaining momentum in the United States. A Gap Year has potential to be a transformative educational experience for emerging adolescents, particularly related to identity development. The purpose of this research was to explore indicators of identity development in a set of 419 open-ended responses to a question in a national Gap Year alumni survey that asked, “What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?” Chickering and Reisser’s framework of identity development provided the structure for the analysis, and Qualitative Content Analysis was employed as the method. Analysis showed indicators of alumni-perceived gains, affiliated primarily with initial stages of identity development. Analysis also indicated alumni-perceived gains in comprehensive stages of identity development that are dependent on development in initial stages. This study contributes to the limited research on Gap Year experiences by illuminating the identity development potential of Gap Year programming. It also indicates the need for further original research focused on the identity development potential of the Gap Year.

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It is incredible to look back on this doctoral journey and realize how many people have impacted it—have impacted me personally. We sometimes acknowledge how many people one person can impact. I'm not sure we adequately consider how many people can impact one person's life. I'm amazed when I consider how many people have impacted mine. This journey has been deeply formative for me on many levels; personal and professional. I recognize the significance of the end of this journey, and look forward to embarking on the next one. I am grateful, and I am a changed, better person for it.

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## **Chapter One**

### **Introduction**

On May 1, 2016, Michelle Obama announced that Malia Obama would be taking a Gap Year before attending Harvard in 2017 (Skiba, 2016). Many news publications covered the story and the Gap Year concept, which has received little attention in the United States, received notable attention that day. Google searches for the term “Gap Year” hit a record high during the week of the Obamas’ announcement, with roughly three times as many searches as any time in the previous five years (Google, 2017a). Worldwide searches of the term “Gap Year” also peaked the week of the Malia announcement (Google, 2017b), though the Gap Year term is better known in Great Britain and several other nations (Haigler & Nelson, 2013).

A Gap Year, as defined by the American Gap Association (AGA), is “an experiential semester or year ‘on,’ typically taken between high school and college in order to deepen practical, professional, and personal awareness” (American Gap Association, 2016b, n.p.). While it is not unusual for British students to take a Gap Year, taking a Gap Year is a growing phenomenon among American emerging adolescents (American Gap Association, 2016d). Emerging adolescence is marked by the transition from adolescence to adulthood between the ages of 18-25 and is the time of life individuals most purposefully explore their identity in relation to love, vocation, and worldview (Arnett, 2000; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1959/1980). Thus, at the same age that many students enter college, presumably as part of a career trajectory, students are exploring their identity. Emerging adolescents have a number of educational options to consider as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. Gap Year researchers consider a Gap Year to be a personally transformative educational option for students (American Gap Association, 2016b; O’Shea, 2014; White, 2009)

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Some higher education professionals support Gap Year ideals because of the potential pitfall of students stepping into career preparation before they have a solid understanding of who they are or what they want to do in life (Fitzsimmons, McGrath, & Ducey, 2011). These educators believe it is important for students to take a break from forward momentum in school to discover their passions and remember why investing in learning is important for their future success. Such higher education professionals embrace a holistic perspective of education and see great promise in the developmental benefits of a Gap Year (Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; O'Shea, 2014).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite its growing popularity, research on the impact of Gap Year programming is limited. While the most extensive research tends to indicate that a significant impact of such programming is personal growth (American Gap Association, 2015; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014), I have found very little that indicates the nature of the personal growth potential for students who take a Gap Year. It is important to study the connections between Gap Year experiences and the personal growth that occurs for students who take a Gap Year; particularly the compelling notion of identity development in relation to Gap Year participation.

### **Research Question**

This dissertation considered indications of identity development in alumni responses to an open-ended question on the 2014-2015 AGA National Alumni Survey that asked, "What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?" I used Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development framework to code responses for indicators of identity development, in order to answer the following research question:

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What indicators of identity development are evident in the responses to an identity-oriented open-ended survey question on the American Gap Association National Alumni Survey?

### **AGA National Alumni Survey and Chickering and Reisser's framework.**

Previous analysis of responses to the closed and quantifiable AGA National Alumni Survey questions highlight the existence of significant personal development impacts of Gap Year programming on Gap Year alumni (American Gap Association, 2015). My study contributes by providing a systematic synthesis of responses to an identity-oriented, open-ended question through an identity-development lens. This perspective offers a glimpse into a potentially significant aspect of what Gap Year programming might offer participants.

The lens I used to explore indicators of identity development in Gap Year alumni responses was the identity development theory of Chickering and Reisser (1993). Chickering's theory is a significant and widely-used Student Development theory initially published in 1969. His original work explored how the higher education context might impact students' identity development. As a by-product, Chickering's research also became the first major resource for Student Development professionals tasked with caring for the holistic development of students (Patton, Renn, Guido, & Quaye, 2016). Chickering's research was expanded and revised in collaboration with Reisser in 1993. Chickering and Reisser's theory of identity development is comprised of seven developmental vectors that indicate emerging adolescent identity formation:

- *Developing Competence*
- *Managing Emotions*
- *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence*
- *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships*



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- *Establishing Identity*
- *Developing Purpose*
- *Developing Integrity* (Chickering & Reisser, 1993)

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development theory is focused on markers of development shown to be significant for emerging adolescent identity development, with vectors that are conceptually general enough to be adapted for use in various contexts. The theory is built on original research as well as extensive review and synthesis of relevant external research. Chickering and Reisser's vectors are widely recognized and utilized in research studies, including longitudinal validation of the theory itself and validation studies of instruments designed to measure the concepts of the theory (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Foubert, Nixon, Sisson, & Barnes, 2005; Patton et al., 2016; Wachs & Cooper, 2002). Chickering and Reisser's theory has been widely applied by Student Development professionals since Chickering's original publication in 1969 (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). I chose this theory for my research because of its comprehensive nature, its adjustability to my research needs, and its applicability to higher education and student development.

### **Personal Relevance to the Study**

My affinity for Gap Year programming grew out of my own experiences. I came to appreciate the value of intentional community for personal growth when I went on a two-week wilderness kayaking expedition as a part of my college program. I found the experience so transformative that I led expeditions for several summers afterwards. There was something about intentional community and getting out in nature that affected those of us who went on those trips—it freed us for a few days to be more honest with others and to rely on one another

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and ourselves in ways we never would in other contexts. But despite these wilderness experiences, I (in hindsight) prematurely settled into a teaching career. When I took my seventh year away from teaching to study abroad, I came back to life; I began to remember who I was, what I wanted to do with my life, and how I might contribute to the world. As I have learned more about the Gap Year concept, I have recognized the benefit it could have had in my own critical transition to adulthood, particularly in terms of exploring my identity and purpose. My own story fuels my interest in how Gap Year programs might facilitate identity development for emerging adolescents as they make critical decisions about their life trajectories.

Roughly 70% of emerging adolescents go straight to college after graduating from high school (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a). Thus, college is poised to be a highly influential catalyst for emerging adolescent identity development. Yet, some research suggests that the primary reason students go to college is to ensure their future (financial) success (Astin, Astin & Lindholm, 2011; Kettering Foundation, 2013). Given the deep need for emerging adolescents to explore identity in relational, vocational, and global contexts (Arnett, 2000; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1959/1980), I question how appropriate it is to encourage all high school students to go straight to college without also providing them with opportunities to intentionally explore their identity more deeply before doing so.

My current work in the Student Development department at a private, liberal arts college gives me the opportunity to work closely with emerging adolescents. My own observations confirm the deep significance that identity formation has on emerging adolescent (student) development and, as a result, I have become increasingly interested in the identity development potential of Gap Year programing for emerging adolescents prior to entering college.

**Limitations of the Research**

This research is designed to particularly explore identity development potential in Gap Year programming. As identity development is the major developmental task of the emerging adolescents who take a Gap Year, it is an appropriate exploration. This exploratory focus affects the design of this study, and contributes to several limitations of this research. One limitation is the use of Chickering and Reisser's framework for this research analysis. While Chickering and Reisser's work is widely respected in the field, it has been criticized for being more applicable to majority populations than minority groups (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Students of minority populations, such as racial minority groups, can experience identity development differently than majority groups because of the social significance of their racial identity development over other aspects of identity development (Pope, 2000). Research specifically involving Chickering and Reisser's theory also shows that females can approach some aspects of the identity development vectors in a different order than the vectors are generally presented in (Foubert et al., 2005). While these limitations exist, Gap Year participants are often majority populations, however, more females take a Gap Year experience than males (American Gap Association, 2015; Heath, 2007; Hoe, 2014; Jones, 2004). According to the American Gap Association (2015), participants in the AGA National Alumni Survey were 84% white, 97% native English speakers, 70% female, and academically strong students from medium to high-income households. Thus, Chickering and Reisser's theory seems like an acceptable framework to apply to this data set.

A second limitation of this research is that I specifically looked at the data set through an identity development lens. The survey's original purpose was not identity development research. I selected this data set because it is extensive and, according to Luke Parrott, a member of the American Gap Association research committee, had not yet been analyzed (L. Parrott, personal

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communication, September 13, 2016). The question and responses I selected were identity-oriented because they referred to skills and knowledge acquired through a Gap Year experience, and developing competency is a major building block of developing identity according to Chickering and Reisser's theory (1993). Thus, the survey responses in the data set I used, though not directly answering questions about identity development, shed light on possible identity development processes students engaged in during their Gap Year.

A final limitation of this research is associated with the method I employed. I chose to analyze survey responses in light of Chickering and Reisser's developmental theory. This concept-driven approach allowed me to consider the data in light of a theoretical identity development lens to address my research question and explore indications of identity development evident in the data (Schreier, 2012). However, this approach did not allow the data to speak for themselves as clearly as they would have if the responses were not being viewed through a conceptual lens. Viewing data through the lens of identity development meant I was more likely to classify indicators of identity development than I might have if I took a more data-driven approach. While another researcher may have taken a different approach, I sought to gain a picture of identity development that could be articulated by a previously existing and respected theory of identity development.

## **Conclusion**

My own story of identity development and my work with emerging adolescents in higher education contexts caused me to consider the potential impact that Gap Year experiences might have for students. Emerging adolescents can benefit by exploring who they are in a context that nurtures such exploration (King, 2011). A Gap Year is meant to be intentional time off from the traditional education and career track, allowing students time and opportunity for such

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exploration (O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). Given the potential for identity development within Gap Year experiences, I analyzed responses to an identity-oriented open-ended survey question in the 2014-2015 AGA National Alumni Survey (American Gap Association, 2015) according to the identity development vectors in Chickering and Reisser's (1993) research.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 60% of students who began college in 2008 had completed their bachelor degree six years later (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016b). While rhetoric about the necessity of college education increases, college graduation rates do not reflect matching growth. Gap Year programs could be one answer to this college readiness concern. Gap Year programs offer intentional opportunities for students to develop college and vocational readiness through experiences that typically involve community engagement and support, experience and exploration of vocational interests, and opportunities to learn from and serve different people groups across the country and the world (Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). Data from the AGA National Alumni Survey support the idea that students learn and grow positively from such experiences with increased student-perceived maturity, confidence, understanding, personal and identity development, and readiness for college and beyond (American Gap Association, 2016c).

Research by Schwartz, Côté, and Arnett (2005) indicates the importance of healthy identity development during emerging adolescence, and suggests that some emerging adolescents might benefit from a structured environment intended to support them as they encounter the nebulous nature of identity development. Three of the top colleges in the nation recognize the benefits of such environments when they encourage incoming freshmen to defer college enrollment in order to take a Gap Year (Buckles, 2016; Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Princeton University, 2016). These colleges suggest that participation in Gap Year programs might be a valuable way for many students to grow personally as well as prepare better for

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college (and life) afterwards. Gap Year research supports the assertion that Gap Year experiences can promote personal, age-appropriate developmental growth, and thus can be transformative and holistic educational experiences (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; King, 2011; O'Shea, 2014)

As far as Gap Year alumni themselves, many believe that the most important outcome of their experience was gaining a better sense of their personal identity (Haigler & Nelson, 2013). According to the AGA National Alumni Survey report, 96-98% of alumni surveyed felt that the most significant benefits of their Gap Year experience were time for personal reflection, assistance in developing as a person, increased maturity, and increased self-confidence (American Gap Association, 2015). Numerous British Gap Year alumni felt their experiences enabled them to understand themselves better, become more comfortable with themselves, and grow in self-confidence and maturity (O'Shea, 2014). Gap Year alumni often refer to personal growth when discussing Gap Year outcomes (American Gap Association, 2015; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014); research is needed to explore age-appropriate and developmentally significant aspects of personal growth, such as identity development (Arnett, 2000; King, 2011).

This review of the literature considers connections between Gap Year programming and identity development. First, this review outlines the history and concept of the Gap Year, beginning with its British origins, and considering program structures, trends, and research. Next, it explores program structures in the United States, including trends, current research, and the role of the American Gap Association as an accreditation organization dedicated to research and promotion of American Gap Year programming. Then, this literature review considers emerging adolescent identity development theories, with particular focus on Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework for identity development in its context as a theory of Student

Development. Finally, this chapter reviews research at the intersection of Gap Year and identity development research.

### **Gap Year Definition and Roots**

A Gap Year is an intentional delay in formal higher education studies by students who intend to complete their schooling afterwards (Haigler & Nelson, 2013). More specifically, as defined by the AGA, it is “an experiential semester or year ‘on,’ typically taken between high school and college in order to deepen practical, professional, and personal awareness” (American Gap Association, 2016b, n.p.). Many proponents of the Gap Year recognize that though it is not a traditional educational experience, it serves as a supplemental educational experience that is often more challenging and transformative than the traditional higher education track (O’Shea, 2014; White, 2009). The Gap Year pause in traditional higher education is generally used for cultural immersion, volunteer work, personal growth, and skill development as a means for students to better understand themselves, others, and the world (O’Shea, 2014; White, 2009). A Gap Year serves the purposes of connecting students with the world around them and providing them opportunities to serve those in need. It also gives them a chance to take a break from educational achievement so they can grow personally and appreciate learning for inherent rather than instrumental reasons (Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O’Shea, 2014; White, 2009).

The origin of the Gap Year can be traced back to the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century when many wealthy, young British men took time for intentional educational travel, called the European Grand Tour, as a way to experience the world (O’Shea, 2014). This tour was considered the culmination of a superior education, and generally involved travel, along with a tutor and perhaps servants, to major Italian cities and back via significant European cities



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(Black, 2003; Sweet, 2015). According to Sweet (2015), most educational tourists tended to travel a minimum of six months to similar locations in order to experience society abroad, and to study art, architecture, politics, and history. It was meant to be a rite of passage for elite young men that took them away from the safety and constraints of living with parents to allow them to become independent and confident men. According to Black (2003), travel could be difficult and dangerous, particularly in times of war before and after the eighteenth century, but this did not prevent students from traveling abroad. In fact, diplomats in foreign countries regularly welcomed and entertained these wealthy tourists, and travelers could find fellow British citizens in most cities (Black, 2003). Toward the end of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century, better transportation and the promotion of affordable visits abroad led to a shift in European travel, allowing for individuals from a greater variety of social classes to travel, and men and women of varying age to venture abroad, so that the educational character of the tour deteriorated over time (Sweet, 2015).

In the 1970s, British organizations began to form for the purpose of facilitating so-called ‘Gap Year’ volunteer and travel experiences for students, much like the initial concept of the Grand Tour. Today between 5 and 10% of British students participate in Gap Year programs, and the concept is widely known (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O’Shea, 2014). In the United States, Gap Year professionals have observed an increase in Gap Year interest, though there is not yet a clear way to track Gap Year participation; awareness continues to be limited (American Gap Association, 2016c; Hoe, 2014). While Gap Year attendance in the United Kingdom has plateaued (Crawford & Crib, 2012), interest continues on a global scale as nations such as Australia, New Zealand, Germany, Japan, and South Africa show increases in promotion and participation (Chan, 2015; Clermont, 2012; Curtis, 2014; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O’Shea, 2014;

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Rabie & Naidoo, 2016). In the United States, attendance at promotional Gap Year fairs has risen by 294% since 2010, and google searches of the “Gap Year” term have consistently increased since 2005—with a sizable jump in searches in May of 2016 when Michelle Obama announced that Malia Obama would take a Gap Year before entering Harvard in 2017 (American Gap Association, 2016c; Skiba, 2016). Awareness of American Gap Year potential has been bolstered by the endorsement of ivy league schools such as Harvard, and by promotional, research, and standards-setting organizations such as Gap Year Fairs and the American Gap Association (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O’Shea, 2014).

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to establish definitive Gap Year participation rates because students can take a year off after high school for several reasons. They might participate in an organized Gap Year program, create their own unique Gap Year itinerary, or simply take a year to work or relax before considering higher education (Hoe, 2014; Jones, 2004). Many students take advantage of established programs and a number of students string together a series of short-term Gap Year programs of interest to them (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; Jones, 2004; O’Shea, 2014; White, 2009). Gap Year programs often include either domestic or overseas volunteer work. Gap Year programs can also include wilderness or adventure trips, travel or leisure trips, educational experiences, sports or special interest programs, and cultural and language immersion experiences (Haigler & Nelson, 2005; Jones, 2004; White, 2009). With such a wide variety of programming, a Gap Year has the potential to appeal to many individuals, though the variety can also make overarching research, promotion, accreditation, and standardization of programs difficult (American Gap Association, 2016e; Jones, 2004; O’Shea, 2014).

**The British Gap Year today.**

The United Kingdom remains dominant in the Gap Year field, contributing over half of all participants globally (Haigler & Nelson, 2013). In 2004, the British Department for Education and Skills addressed a need for common language and understanding concerning Gap Year experiences, and commissioned Dr. Andrew Jones at the University of London to comprehensively define, summarize, understand, and quantify research and literature on the growing Gap Year phenomenon. Jones' report recognizes the variety of Gap Year programming by categorizing Gap Year experiences, and recommends additional Gap Year research, greater promotion of Gap Years, and universal accessibility (including funding) to Gap Year programming (Jones, 2004).

Young people in the United Kingdom are motivated to participate in the over 85 United Kingdom-based Gap Year programs for several reasons (Jones, 2004). A number of participants are motivated to help others domestically and abroad, though there is some doubt that the reasons are entirely altruistic, as many students appreciate gaining new skills and padding their résumé in the process (Jones, 2004; O'Shea, 2014). Participants desire to take a break from the rigors of academia or career, to gain work experience, to learn about themselves, to gain independence, and to better make decisions about their future (Crawford & Crib, 2012; Jones, 2004). O'Shea (2014) summarizes Gap Year motivations with reference to young people's desires to gain skills, perspectives, and attributes they are unsure how to develop otherwise at home. More specifically, according to O'Shea's research, students who take a Gap Year want change; to experience something new and outside their typical education, experience, and comfort zone. Another likely motivational factor influencing students to take time abroad is the example set by the royal family in the early 2000s when both Prince William and Prince Harry took Gap Years

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to volunteer and learn skills in various locations around the world and in England (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012)

According to Heath's (2007) content analysis of Gap Year literature, in return for their investment, participants benefit from time to self-reflect, allowing them to make better decisions about their future career. O'Shea (2014) also reports that Gap Year alumni spoke frequently about how their experience helped them to understand themselves better, to grow in relationships with others, to become more adept at understanding and making meaning of the world, and to reconsider their worldviews and their future plans. Furthermore, while he recognized some less-than-altruistic reasons students had for volunteering abroad, O'Shea found that students often became more others-focused because of their time volunteering. Participants can gain valuable personal enrichment and development from their Gap Year experience, be more focused when they return to school, gain important interpersonal skills such as team-work, communication, and management, and, subsequently, be more highly regarded by potential future employers (Heath, 2007).

Despite reported benefits, as the Gap Year movement has become established in Great Britain, critics have spoken against it (O'Shea, 2014). In terms of equity, some researchers are concerned that individuals from more educated and affluent families, who are better able to take advantage of Gap Year programs, have a greater edge in the job market, thus widening the gap between the wealthy and the less privileged (Heath, 2007; Jones, 20014; Lyons et al., 2012). While Heath (2007) asserts that students take Gap Years to gain employability, O'Shea's (2014) research shows some students motivated to take a Gap Year as a rejection of the competitive education/career system they find themselves in, not necessarily to gain an edge in the market.

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The assumption that employers prefer employees with Gap Year experience is challenged by the results of longitudinal studies by Crawford and Crib (2012) who maintain that employers do not take skills acquired in Gap Years into account when hiring individuals, and that if anything, Gap Year participants simply find themselves behind their classmates when they apply for jobs, and subsequently make less money. Not all agree, however, as other research indicates employer frustration that employees lack skills they consider vitally important such as communication skills, personal skills, and processing skills—the sorts of skills widely referenced as gained by Gap Year experiences (Jones, 2004). Unfortunately, though these skills are highly valued, they are not as widely recognized or intentionally developed in employees (Jones, 2004).

Perhaps a problem lies with the lack of appropriate transference of skills or the lack of productive processing of Gap Year experiences, as noted by Snee in her qualitative thematic analysis of British Gap Year participants' travel blogs (2014). Snee (2014) wondered what exactly makes a Gap Year experience a moral or transformative endeavor, particularly given the demographics of largely middle class participants, the personal advantages they gain from their experiences, and the overseas drinking parties sometimes referenced in blogs. Snee did not believe the dual process of identity development alongside cultural immersion could be assumed for Gap Year participants, particularly if participants consider their experience to be part of gaining personal advantage for the future—thus limiting their ability to reflect on a deeper or more interpersonal level. Snee's research indicates that having an intentional reflection process in place might enhance the Gap Year experience. Hickman and Collins (2014) recognize the importance of the transference of significant experiences in research that found that a simple, memorable instrument such as the 4i model (Information, Inference, Implication, Intent) can be beneficial to help students process and transfer learning experiences (Hickman & Collins, 2014).

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The most consistent conclusions drawn by British Gap Year researchers regarding the value and transferability of Gap Year experiences are that the type of Gap Year experience students participate in, and the manner in which they process their experience make a difference, especially in view of the wide variety of options available and the range of skills participants might gain (Crawford & Cribb, 2012; Heath, 2007; Hickman & Collins, 2014; Jones, 2004; Snee, 2014). If Gap Year participants find a way to gain valuable work and personal development skills, to gain international cultural and language experience, and to transfer their experience to regular life, this could be considered advantageous toward their future career and future self (Chan, 2015; Snee, 2014).

Several British organizations exist to help students design and take part in Gap Year programs, such as [gapyear.com](http://gapyear.com), [gap-year.com](http://gap-year.com), and [gapforce.org](http://gapforce.org). These organizations promote Gap Year programs and provide resources for interested students (Jones, 2004). According to Jones' report (2004), however, the Gap Year movement in the United Kingdom needs to unify with a standards-setting organization that might also find a way to accredit Gap Year programs. Year Out is an umbrella organization that provides some resources for those interested in Gap Years, and, more importantly, holds member programs to codes of practice, operating guidelines, risk and crisis policies, accounts verification, insurance, and compliance with national safety standards (British Standards Online Group, 2014; Year Out Group, 2016). Despite Jones' (2004) call for it a decade ago, as of today, there is still no standard of accreditation for Gap Year programs, nor a reliable means by which students can gain transferable credit for their experience. Interestingly, although American Gap Year programming has taken longer to catch on than British Gap Years did, American Gap Year advocates are taking up the call that British programs sounded years ago, and gathering together to establish common goals.

**American Gap Year programming.**

According to Haigler and Nelson (2013), American Gap Year programming began with a program Neil Bull promoted as having a positive impact on students at the Verde Valley School in Arizona, where he served as headmaster. Bull's student service program that connected students with Navajo reservations and Mexican towns received national attention in 1980, effectively linking the Verde Valley school with the Gap Year concept. Parents and educators began asking Bull for Gap Year program advice, and he saw the need for an organization dedicated to Gap Year programming (Haigler & Nelson, 2013). Bull started the Center for Interim Studies in Cambridge, Massachusetts at that time, and just a few years later, nearby Harvard College began to include a note about Gap Years in its acceptance letters to new students (Haigler & Nelson, 2013). In 2000, several of Harvard's admissions counselors crafted communication to formally encourage all accepted students to defer enrollment in order to take a Gap Year—rather than continue into academic work without a break (Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Haigler & Nelson, 2013). Several prestigious colleges advanced the cause of Gap Years by promoting intentional enrollment deferment. The head of admissions at Middlebury shared his internal research that Gap Year students outperformed and were more engaged than other students (American Gap Association, 2016d; Clagett, 2013), and Princeton went so far as to subcontract with a Gap Year organization to provide tuition-free participation so that they might reach a goal of 10% participation for each freshman class (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; Princeton University, 2016).

Since Bull's first recognized organization for Gap Year programming in 1980, programming in the United States has grown tremendously. In contrast with conversation in the United Kingdom over the merits of taking a Gap Year, in the United States, the notion is

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primarily promoted positively, with college admissions departments and guidance counselors as key advocates (Claggett, 2013; Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Haigler & Nelson, 2005, 2013; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). In the 1990s, AmeriCorps was founded as a national program which provided opportunity for students to volunteer for a no-cost Gap Year program with stipend and scholarship potential (Haigler & Nelson, 2013). USA Gap Year Fairs eventually began to travel the country, promoting Gap Year programs. Almost 40 programs are listed on their webpage as regular participants in nearly 40 events yearly (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; USA Gap Year Fairs, 2016). In 2012, Ethan Knight established the American Gap Association (AGA) in order to promote, resource, and accredit Gap Year programs nationwide (American Gap Association, 2016b). According to the AGA site, he is currently working to find a way for students to gain transferable credit for their Gap Year experience and have access to federal loan money for Gap Year program participation.

In America, the Gap Year phenomenon is gaining tentative momentum, with some overlaps with British models, as well as some distinct features. While the Gap Year is well-known in England and considered a rite of passage for many, it is still a relatively new concept to many Americans (Moy, 2013). The British travel more regularly than Americans, pay less for higher education, and have fewer opportunities to travel as a part of the college experience, perhaps drawing them more naturally to the Gap Year concept than Americans; while in America, taking a break from forward career momentum is generally considered unwise, if considered as an option at all (Moy, 2013). Some researchers are calling for American students to follow the British lead, and take a Gap Year as a pause in the traditional educational momentum to refocus, figure out who they are, and consider their purpose in life (Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). These researchers promote



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Gap Year experiences as truly powerful education—allowing students to appreciate and embrace learning for its own sake, to develop personal meaning and meaningful relationships, and to appreciate and develop skills to serve as citizens of the global economy (O’Shea, 2014; White, 2009).

Interestingly, the primary reasons American students give for taking Gap Years align with the rationale of those who encourage students to take a Gap Year. According to Haigler and Nelson (2013), the two top reasons students give for taking a Gap Year are to take a break from traditional education, and to learn more about who they are. Likewise, personal growth and life experiences, a desire to travel and experience other cultures, and a break from academic study are the most significant reasons American Gap Year alumni stated for why they took their Gap Year, according to the AGA National Alumni Survey (American Gap Association, 2015).

The benefits associated with American Gap year experiences align fairly well with the motivations students have for taking Gap Years. Haigler and Nelson’s (2013) analysis of data from a survey of 300 Gap Year alumni, combined with over 60 structured follow-up interviews with parents and alumni, reflects Gap Year participant gains in self-awareness, confidence, recognition of personal responsibility, greater resilience, and increased maturity related to education, vocation, the world, and themselves. Similarly, according to the AGA National Alumni Survey, alumni recognize benefits of their Gap Year as offering time for personal reflection, personal development, increased maturity and self-confidence, improved interaction and communication with others, and greater interest in and understanding of other people and cultures globally (American Gap Association, 2015). According to White (2009), Gap Year participants typically gain independence, maturity, and self-direction, and tend to become more focused and re-energized by their experience.

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While there is conversation in the British literature about the merits of Gap Year programming, few researchers have raised concerns about the American Gap Year experience. Internet searches of the term produce information largely connected with provider organizations, though numerous articles also exist, such as a *Forbes* article from 2014. This article, with over 200,000 views, discusses potential benefits of Gap Year programs, and states that the goal of a Gap Year is to answer questions about oneself and one's direction in life (Bridges, 2014). If nothing else, internet searches of American Gap Year resources illumine the need for greater awareness and academic research on the topic.

Perhaps the most significant critiques in global literature directly related to Gap Year programming in America, are ethical concerns surrounding the notion of sending privileged young volunteers overseas to do humanitarian work. At the end of volunteer experiences, the volunteers often benefit more than the people who they went to help (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Guttentag, 2009; Illich, 1968). "Volunteer tourism" is a term used by many critics of humanitarian travel who are concerned that volunteer work overseas can have negative effects such as desensitizing travelers to the true effects of poverty, and stealing jobs from local workers (Guttentag, 2009). Perhaps the most criticized aspect of volunteer tourism is a negative reinforcement of stereotypes that can occur when volunteers travel to help others, such as a sense that a volunteer is smarter than locals because of their superior education, or particularly valuable because of their access to resources, or even luckier than those in poverty because they were born into a better situation. The division between those who are serving and those being served can thus be widened by volunteerism, though the volunteer might intend or imagine the opposite to be the case (Guttentag, 2009; Illich, 1968; Lyons et al., 2012; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; Sossou & Dubus, 2013). Some of the advantages cited in Gap Year research consider the

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particular benefits of traveling overseas, and the transformative power that making a difference in the world can have on individuals (American Gap Association, 2015; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014). Critics question at what cost these benefits are gained, and how truly effective the benefits actually are (Guttentag, 2009; Illich, 1968; Lyons et al., 2012; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; Sossou & Dubus, 2013).

Despite concerns over effects of volunteer tourism, which is often an element of Gap Year programming, by and large, American Gap Year programming is widely appreciated and promoted as beneficial (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014). Perhaps it is debatable how useful a Gap Year might be for career advancement (as indicated by current British discussion) but with an American focus on personal gain and experiential educational benefits, it is possible that Gap Year programming might in the end be a better supplement for American higher education than British higher education. The most widely discussed Gap Year-specific critique in American Gap Year literature is in line with Heath's (2007) concern that there is disparity between those who know about and can take advantage of what Gap Years have to offer, and those who lack access to such programs (American Gap Association, 2015, 2016b; Couric, 2016; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2013). This is being addressed by credentialing programs, by further research, by promotion of the concept nationally, and by the establishment of scholarships for students who cannot afford a Gap Year (American Gap Association, 2016b, e; Couric, 2016). Thus, the field continues to grow in America (American Gap Association, 2016d; O'Shea, 2014), in the midst of a broader conversation surrounding the great potential educational value of such programs for students as an experiential compliment to traditional education that encourages them to grow by learning, serving, and discovering themselves (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2013; White, 2009). Perhaps the greatest momentum publicizing this potential is

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the work of the American Gap Association, dedicated to promoting and credentialing Gap Year programs.

**American Gap Association.**

The American Gap Association was founded in 2012 with the mission to make it possible for more students to participate in transformative Gap Year experiences by accrediting safe and effective programs, providing a hub of resources for guidance counselors and college administrators, offering Gap Year scholarships, and contributing research to the limited Gap Year literature currently available (American Gap Association, 2016b). The AGA currently accredits 16 programs, with another 18 under review. For an organization to be accredited, it must undergo an evaluation for integrity, and if applicable, for safety measures in the wilderness and developing countries, for responsible service-learning practices, for quality independent student placement practices, and for partnerships with reputable organizations. The AGA is registered with the United States Department of Justice and the United States Federal Trade Commission as the official standards-setting body in the United States Gap Year industry (American Gap Association, 2016e). The AGA also works to gather leaders and lay people in the Gap Year profession annually by hosting a conference to discuss best practices and collaborate on research (American Gap Association, 2016a).

In keeping with its mission to contribute to the field of American Gap Year research, the AGA launched a National Alumni Survey and analyzed the results in collaboration with the Temple University Institute for Survey Research (American Gap Association, 2015). Research on American Gap Year experiences is limited, and this AGA/Temple project has produced the most comprehensive data from American Gap Year alumni to date. It offers a wealth of information on participant demographics and student perceptions of their Gap Year experiences

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(American Gap Association, 2015). According to the report, American Gap Year participants tend to be largely female, white, English-speaking, from medium-high income families, and disproportionately from private schools, as opposed to public. Students tend to earn good grades, have well-educated parents, and be financially supported by their parents for their Gap Year experience—particularly if they travel abroad (American Gap Association, 2015).

According to the report, American Gap Year participants highly recommend that other students participate in programs; the degree to which they appraise their experience positively correlates with how many Gap Year activities they participated in and whether they traveled abroad. The AGA National Alumni Survey report shows that alumni most appreciate the personal impacts of their experience. Given the significant personal impacts Gap Year experiences might provide for emerging adolescents, it is important to consider the processes involved in their personal development.

### **Identity Development Theories**

According to the AGA National Alumni Survey Report (American Gap Association, 2015), the greatest perceived outcomes for students who participate in Gap Year programs are those of personal development. This conclusion supports the AGA definition of the Gap Year as an experiential year of “deepening practical, professional, and personal awareness” (American Gap Association, 2016b, n.p.). It also aligns with the strong developmental tendency of emerging adolescents toward identity development at this time in their lives (Arnett, 2000). While emerging adolescence is a crucially important time for individuals to do identity work, and a Gap Year holds potential for students to do this identity work, some Gap Year researchers wonder if students adequately process their significant experiences with the deep, critical, or

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interactive reflection necessary in order to truly gain from them (Hickman & Collins, 2014; Snee, 2014).

What is identity, and what constitutes identity development? According to Vignoles, Schwartz, and Luykx (2011), identity can be defined simply by the answer one has to the question, “Who are you?” According to Vignoles et al. (2011), identity theories are developed by researchers interested in the broad topic because, beyond the simple definition, the concept of identity itself is deeply complex—personal, relational, material, and collective, stable and fluid, formed and revised, and implicitly and explicitly constructed personally and by societal influences. This literature review reviews several identity development theories relevant to Gap Year research and to emerging adolescents, and which belong to a group of identity theories pertinent to college students.

**Identity development theories in context.**

The intention of this research study is to consider identity development in the Gap Year context, which requires the use of a theory relevant to college-aged, emerging adolescents. Identity theories abound, with one group of theories categorized as Student Development theories. Student Development Theory is “a collection of theories related to college students that explains how they grow and develop holistically, with increased complexity, while enrolled in a postsecondary educational environment” (Patton et al., 2016, p. 6). A Gap Year is primarily meant to be a gap or bridge between high school and higher education, and many proponents of the Gap Year consider it to be an alternative higher educational experience outside the classroom (American Gap Association, 2016b; O’Shea, 2014; White, 2009). Thus, this research considers students who participate in Gap Year programs part of the college student population, and considers theories part of Student Development Theory as relevant for Gap Year participants.

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Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework is one of the most widely-received, out of many identity development theories considered part of Student Development Theory.

Theories that fall into the category of Student Development Theory directly apply to students in a variety of college contexts (Patton et al., 2016). Student development research in the United States was first organized by the American Council on Education conference that met to clarify the field of Student Development and its interaction with other collegiate departments, as well as to discuss the need for more research in the field (Williamson et al., 1949). The Council met in response to an influx of students enrolling in college after the first World War, and then met again in 1949 to revise their original work as the field continued to grow (Patton et al., 2016). In these pivotal higher education reports, the Council wrote that it is the responsibility of colleges to educate individual students holistically—intellectually and socially, physically, emotionally, and spiritually (American Council on Education, 1937; Williamson et al., 1949). Of particular interest, the Council acknowledged identity development as an important aspect of student development (American Council on Education, 1937; Williamson et al., 1949).

After the American Council on Education reports were published, conversation increased in higher education surrounding effective student development programming on campuses. In the 1960s and 1970s, when more diverse populations began entering higher education than in years prior, Student Development departments explored the work of human development psychologists for help in addressing the needs of all students. In turn, researchers began to study college students (Patton et al., 2016). Erikson's (1959/1980) research on adolescent identity development was a major contribution to the field outside the college setting, and Chickering's subsequent 1969 research on college students, based on Erikson's identity research, became widely used in college Student Development departments (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

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Marcia (1966) explored Erikson's concept of identity development in the 1960s and found that individuals' ability to explore and to commit were key aspects of achieving identity. According to Marcia, individuals achieve development status' based on how they approach exploration and commitment; *Diffusion* (no exploration or commitment), *Foreclosure* (commitment without exploration), *Moratorium* (exploration without commitment), and *Identity Achievement* (exploration and commitment) (Kłym & Ciecuch, 2015; Luyckx et al., 2008; Marcia, 1966).

Another significant contribution to Student Development Theory is the large and growing body of research on socially-constructed identity development. Social identity theories consider how individuals and groups, particularly those in minority populations, make meaning of the world around them (Patton et al., 2016). Social identity theories began to develop in the 1970s as a response to a lack of research into the development of individuals from minority groups who were typically under-represented in research. These theories can provide greater depth of understanding into how individuals from various minority populations develop by focusing on particulars of social group identities and clashes between groups (Brown, 2000). In social identity theory, the experiences of privilege or lack thereof have impacts on individuals' understandings of who they are and of the world around them, and as such, are important underlying concepts in social identity development (Patton et al., 2016). According to Patton et al., social identity theories such as racial identity theories, cultural identity theories, ethnic identity theories, sexual identity theories, gender identity theories, spiritual/faith identity theories, disability identity theories, and social class identity theories continue to be conceptualized, and utilized by Student Development personnel, as a means to address identity development in meaningful ways with minority populations.



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One of the deficiencies of prior social identity theories is that because they focus on particular groups, they do not naturally overlap or recognize that students are complex (Brown, 2000; Patton et al., 2016). Some of the newest social identity theories took this into account and began to explore how various aspects of social identity overlap; one of these is the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship combines various aspects of cognitive, relational, and psychosocial development. According to Baxter Magolda, individuals come to define themselves on their own terms rather than according to external influences by progressing through four phases; *Following Formulas*, *Crossroads* that require individuals to make autonomous decisions, *Becoming the Author of One's Life*, and *Internal Foundation* with a grounded sense of self, conscious belief system, and mutuality in relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Psychosocial theories also attempt to account for multiple elements of development and can also be applied more broadly than social identity theories.

### **Psychosocial theories and Chickering and Reisser.**

Psychosocial theories are the oldest of the student development identity theories (Patton et al., 2016). These theories focus on the significant aspects of identity development at differing life stages individuals progress through, articulating elements of development in a sequence of life stages. Psychosocial theories consider important tasks to be fulfilled and questions to be answered by considering both individuals' psychological processes and influential social constructs (Patton et al., 2016). Erikson's (1959/1980) work on identity development in the 1950s and 1960s is foundational to subsequent psychosocial Student Development Theory identity development research. Erikson identified developmental life stages based on eight crises individuals grapple with before moving to the next stage:

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- *Basic Trust versus Mistrust*
- *Autonomy versus Shame and Doubt*
- *Initiative versus Doubt*
- *Industry versus Inferiority*
- *Identity versus Identity Confusion*
- *Intimacy versus Isolation*
- *Generativity versus Stagnation*
- *Integrity versus Despair* (Erikson, 1959/1980).

Of these stages, *Identity versus Identity Confusion* is a pivotal aspect of adolescent development, and the transition point between childhood and adulthood (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) work specifically explores how college students develop identity, and is based both on Erickson's notions of identity and intimacy in adolescent and early adulthood development, and on over 25 years of studying college students on college campuses. The theory originated with Chickering's (1969) research on the impact of curriculum on student development at Goddard College. This research was conducted by administering personality and achievement tests, and evaluating thoughts and experiences recorded in participant diaries (Thomas & Chickering, 1984). Chickering's conclusions served as the premise of the first edition of *Education and Identity* (1969), where he initially conceptualized the seven vectors of identity development. Chickering and Reisser (1993) worked together to further research and refine Chickering's theory, giving particular consideration to the growing field of research and theory available on identity development at the time. They included Pascarella and Terenzini's (1991) literature review and synthesis of over 2,600 research studies to consider the effects of college on student development. The 1993 revision of Chickering's work included an updated

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review of the literature and the reorganization and renaming of several vectors. Vectors were adjusted in consideration of updates in the research, including research based Chickering's original theory (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The seven vectors of the Chickering and Reisser's theory can be considered as highways to development that are constructive as they interact and build on one another, though they are not always linear, and can be approached differently and on different timetables by different students (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Chickering and Reisser's vectors assess emotional, relational, ethical, and intellectual identity development.

### ***Chickering and Reisser's identity development vectors.***

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) identity development vectors are

- *Developing Competence*
- *Managing Emotions*
- *Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence*
- *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships*
- *Establishing Identity*
- *Developing Purpose*
- *Developing Integrity*

The seven vectors of Chickering and Reisser's identity development framework (1993) are arranged in three groups that build on one another conceptually. The first four components of identity development describe emotional, relational, interpersonal, and aptitude gains.

Development connected to the first four vectors can occur differently and at different rates for individuals, culminating in the fifth vector: *Developing Identity*. *Developing Identity* occurs when individuals have matured to a point they develop a secure sense of self, and are aware of and comfortable with who they are regardless of context or identity implications. The final two

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vectors relate to how individuals show conviction, applying who they know themselves to be to their interactions with the world around them and their place in it (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

Chickering and Reisser's framework can be seen in Figure 1.

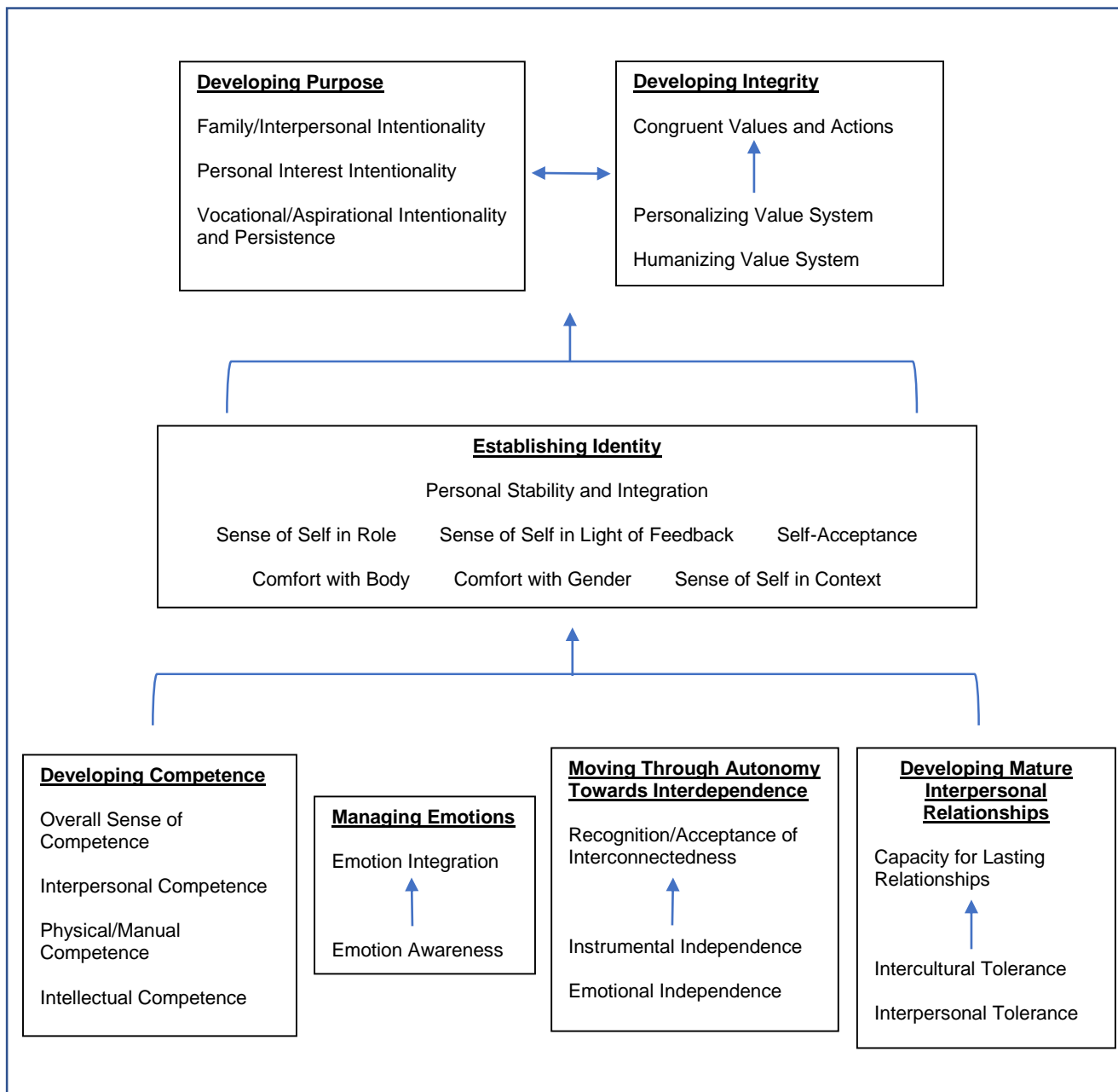


Figure 1. Chickering and Reisser's Vectors and Categories, in Action. This figure displays Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors, and categories within each vector as I articulated them in my research. Arrows indicate development that progresses from one stage or group of stages to the next, though such progression is not always linear and can overlap.

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*Developing Competence* involves gaining confidence in one's ability to manage situations and accomplish goals, and is developed intellectually, physically or manually, interpersonally, and generally. *Managing Emotions* is concerned with an increased recognition and acceptance of emotions, and the subsequent ability to properly control, express, and respond to them. *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence* is initially a shift toward independence from being reliant on others for reassurance, affection, and approval, and toward an increasing ability to self-direct, solve problems, and be mobile. As these abilities to be independent are gained, a balance is then struck between independence and an acceptance of the need to be connected and interdependent. *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* involves increasing intercultural and interpersonal tolerance, and developing appreciation and acceptance of others for who they are regardless of differences. These tolerances then contribute to developing a capacity for lasting intimate relationships (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

The first four vectors of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory all contribute to *Developing Identity*. *Developing identity* is the central vector of this theory, with development that includes individuals' comfort with their body and appearance, and comfort with their gender and sexual orientation. *Developing Identity* is also evidenced by a sense of self in one's particular socio-cultural context, clear self-concept in one's roles and lifestyle, sense of self in light of feedback from loved ones, positive self-esteem and self-acceptance, and personal stability and integration.

As individuals gain a secure sense of their identity, their ability to apply their construct of who they are is evidenced by a developing sense of purpose and integrity. *Developing Purpose* is exhibited by increased intentionality and persistence towards vocational goals and aspirations, personal interests and activities, and interpersonal and family commitments. *Developing*

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*Integrity* involves the humanization of one's value system, by balancing the interests of self and others, and with the personalization of that value system in a manner that consciously affirms particular values while also respecting those of others. The culmination of *Developing Integrity* involves matching actions to values, while simultaneously learning to balance personal interests with social responsibilities (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). According to Chickering and Reisser, these seven identity development vectors shed helpful light on how emerging adolescents develop personally, and on how colleges might assist students in the process of identity development.

***Chickering and Reisser in the research.***

Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development is widely known and used in the Student Development field to inform higher education personnel on how to encourage students' holistic development. The framework is also frequently used as a tangible way to research and describe college student identity development. For example, Chickering and Reisser's framework is a theoretical base for a grounded theory study on the role of parental involvement on college students' ability to develop autonomy (Cullaty, 2011). Costello and English's (2001) study, based on Chickering and Reisser's theory, compares the psychosocial development of college students with and without learning disabilities. Foubert and Grainger (2006) use Chickering and Reisser's framework in a comparative study that explores the developmental impacts of college student involvement in campus clubs and organizations. The framework is also used in a comparative study between the psychosocial development of traditional and nontraditional students (Macari, Maples, & D'Andrea, 2006).

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Much of the quantitative research along these lines makes use of a validated instrument called the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory, or other tools such as the Iowa Developing Competency and Iowa Developing Autonomy Inventories, all based on dimensions in Chickering's original 1969 research (Moran, 2009). More recent quantitative research of psychosocial development uses the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Assessment tool, a revision of the Student Developmental Task and Lifestyle Inventory that reflects Chickering and Reisser's updated research and revision of the seven vectors (Wachs & Cooper, 2002).

Research using Chickering and Reisser's vectors reveals that gender appears to have an impact on individual growth according to developmental vectors; for example, women score significantly higher than men for interpersonal development and intimacy on the SDTLI and IDAI instruments based on the framework (Foubert et al., 2005; Mather & Winston, 1998). Application of Chickering and Reisser's vectors for students of color might also be impacted by the priority students of color attribute to racial social identity over other aspects of development (Pope, 2000). While some researchers have expressed concerns about the applicability of Chickering and Reisser's vectors, particularly to female students and students of color, the theory continues to be one of the best known, and widely used student development theories in existence (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016; Valentine & Taub, 1999).

***Assessing identity development using Chickering and Reisser's vectors.***

To this point, Gap Year literature has focused on the concept of identity development, frequently including discussion of the personal growth that can occur during a Gap Year, and of how a Gap Year is a transformational way to answer questions along the lines of "Who am I?" (American Gap Association, 2015; Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; King,

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2011; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). However, research directly connecting identity development and Gap Year participation is limited.

In a follow-up study of interview and diary data collected from 41 participants during the writing of her dissertation, Bagnoli (2009) made a broad connection between types of European Gap Year travel and identity development that focuses primarily on how different types of travel encouraged reflexivity and subsequent shifts in identity for individuals as they interacted with new surroundings. King (2011, 2012) explored the identity development of 23 British Gap Year participants who had completed a Gap Year in the past five years by analyzing interview data. King (2012) considered Gap Year participants' identity development by analyzing conversations with participants about how they viewed themselves after their Gap Year experience in light of relationships with their parents, with the focus of the study on how participants come to consider themselves adults, rather than on how Gap Year experiences might have contributed to growth. King's 2011 analysis of interviews considers the constructive identity development of British Gap Year participants that occurred during the interview process as participants reflected on their growth, as a "situated accomplishment" part of "wider sociological significance" (p. 346). While King's research most directly connects Gap Year programming with discussions about emerging adolescent identity development, it does this in general terms; according to King, participants felt that through their Gap year experience they gained maturity, confidence, and independence as part of their identity development process.

There is a need for research to succinctly consider the assertions that Gap Year participants gain a better understanding of who they are through their experiences (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014). While Chickering and Reisser's (1993) vectors do not assess the depth of identity development that different students undergo to the degree that theories such as



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social identity theories do, Chickering and Reisser's vectors do cast a wide net for formulating an idea about whether identity development is occurring for students. Furthermore, the vectors provide succinct vocabulary to describe aspects of student identity development. Thus, given the broad use of Chickering and Reisser's theory in identity development research over the years, and given the succinct vocabulary of the vectors coupled with a breadth of applicable student experience, Chickering and Reisser's theory was an appropriate lens through which to assess Gap Year alumni data (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Foubert et al., 2005; Patton et al., 2016).

**Summary**

Identity development is a crucial aspect of emerging adolescent development (Arnett, 2000). Momentum is building in the Gap Year programming arena, with researchers acknowledging potential personal and vocational gains (American Gap Association, 2016c; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). Alumni of Gap Year programs repeatedly cite the value of the personal growth they encountered through their Gap Year experiences (American Gap Association, 2015; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; King, 2011; O'Shea, 2014). Given the significance of identity development for emerging adolescents, this is an aspect of Gap Year programming that ought to be explored more pointedly (King, 2011). Student development theories abound that might facilitate such exploration. Chickering and Reisser's theory of identity development—with its seven vectors—is an appropriate psychosocial developmental theory that might be helpful for specific exploration of the identity development that seems to occur for students who take Gap Years (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Assessing Gap Year alumni reflections through this lens of identity development could be a valuable contribution to the dearth of literature specifically connecting two concepts regularly discussed together.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methods**

#### **Introduction**

The AGA National Alumni Survey serves as the cornerstone of this research project that explores the link between identity development and Gap Year programming (American Gap Association, 2015). While some connections have been made between identity development and Gap Year experiences by European researchers (Bagnoli, 2009; King, 2011, 2012), there is limited research available to articulate the connections further. Specific American Gap Year research on the topic appears to be nonexistent. This research sought to explore the question “What indicators of identity development are evident in the responses to an identity-oriented, open-ended survey question on the American Gap Association National Alumni Survey?”

This analysis of open-ended alumni responses to a national survey question, about skills and knowledge gained through the Gap Year experience, considered alumni reflections through a particular lens to illuminate further the question of identity development. The survey question that asked, “What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?” seemed to elicit responses likely to indicate aspects of identity development according to Chickering and Reisser’s framework (1993). One of Chickering and Reisser’s seven vectors considers gains in competency, thus this question appeared to be conducive to my exploration. My analysis of American Gap Year programming data explored this link between identity development and Gap Year programming as directly as possible, using existing and accessible data.

#### **Methodology**

Given a variety of qualitative approaches, I chose to use Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to analyze this large set of qualitative data. QCA is a research method that facilitates

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systematic, interpretive analysis of large quantities of data by reducing that data to a limited number of categories. It is a flexible method of analysis that recognizes context, and it can also adjust to account for emerging themes in the data. Because as a method it is interpretive, various valid approaches can be made to the same data to summarize or reduce the information (Schreier, 2012). This was a good method for analysis of the large data-set I explored, as it allowed me to reduce many responses according to developmental themes for further categorization and interpretation. This method also allowed me to analyze data with a focus on indicators of identity development. It narrowed interpretation to a well-known theoretical concept of what identity development can look like.

QCA research methodology was employed to analyze AGA National Alumni Survey responses by coding responses according to specific indications of identity development. I designed my coding framework according to Chickering and Reisser's widely-recognized measures of identity development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993), and built in flexibility for additional data-driven coding within subcategories beyond this. This methodological approach allowed for comprehensive consideration of alumni responses that had the potential to contain indications of personal identity growth.

**Participation**

This research utilized secondary survey data that had not yet been analyzed. Survey respondents were national Gap Year alumni who participated in the 2014-2015 AGA National Alumni Survey. I analyzed alumni responses to the open-ended survey question that asked, "What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?" This open-ended question was answered by 419 respondents. The survey format did not force participant responses, so not all respondents completed the entire survey or answered every open-ended

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question. According to the American Gap Association (2015), of the 1,002 individuals who clicked on the survey link, 863 United States or Canadian citizens over the age of 18 agreed to participate in the research and acknowledged having taken a Gap Year according to the survey definition. The survey was completed by 558 individuals, constituting a set of responses about how Gap Year programming might potentially elaborate on a connection between Gap Year programming and emerging adolescent identity development.

**Instrumentation**

The AGA National Alumni Survey was anonymously conducted through the Institute for Survey Research at Temple University in 2014 and 2015 by Dr. Nina Hoe, and participants who wished were entered into a drawing to win one of twenty \$50 Amazon gift cards (American Gap Association, 2015). The online survey used in Hoe's research took approximately 15 minutes for respondents to complete. Gap Year alumni were encouraged to participate in the survey by Gap Year program leaders through social media and personal communications. The survey was launched on August 28, 2014 and was live for 11 months (American Gap Association, 2015). Following a preliminary explanation and participation statement, the survey provided an explanation of a Gap Year, and a question that asked if participants took a Gap Year as defined by the definition provided. The survey was taken voluntarily and answers were not forced, with most questions in multiple-choice format. The survey contained 52 multiple-choice questions, 4 short response questions, 5 comprehensive multiple-choice "check all that apply" question prompts with between 7 and 25 possible responses, and 8 questions with the option to provide an "other" response, including the final survey-wide "other." The survey was arranged in five sections; background information, Gap Year experience, high school information, college/postsecondary education, and life now, with four of the five comprehensive multiple-

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choice questions, and all five open-response questions in the Gap Year experience section. The simple and comprehensive multiple-choice responses to survey questions were analyzed and reported on in the AGA National Alumni Survey Report (American Gap Association, 2015). See appendix A for a copy of this survey in full.

The AGA National Alumni Survey included several open-ended response questions, two of which allowed space for explanation following multiple-choice questions. The question I analyzed, regarding what skills and knowledge were acquired, stood on its own because it was not linked to any survey question. This made it more independently robust for purposes of analysis. The nature of the question also led to responses that were more likely to be articulated in a list format, which proved helpful for segmenting and analyzing data in this study.

Additionally, the content of the question seemed to connect well with Chickering and Reisser's vectors of identity development, particularly the vector dealing with increased competence.

Many Gap Year programs include volunteer work, intentional community, and experience overseas, so it seemed pertinent to explore the extent to which alumni might describe identity development in response to a question about skills and knowledge acquired. Identity development concepts beyond competency seemed likely to be found in the data as the survey report of the multiple-choice questions showed that alumni felt their Gap Year encouraged personal growth (American Gap Association, 2015).

**Data Collection**

I was given access to the AGA National Alumni Survey response data for my research by the original researcher. To my knowledge, the open-ended questions in the data set have not yet been analyzed (L. Parrott, personal communication, September 13, 2016). The data shared with me were contained in one large excel spreadsheet that could be manipulated and highlighted for

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more effective investigation. The responses were arranged in columns in order of survey question (including both open-ended questions and multiple choice questions). I was able to look across responses to assess all responses to individual questions, or, individual participant responses to all questions. This was helpful for considering the context of responses.

**Data Analysis**

I analyzed data using a QCA coding frame. The purpose of a coding frame is to reduce and focus, or to categorize, data for analysis. QCA can be approached in a data-driven manner where it is categorized as themes emerge from the data, a concept-driven approach where data are categorized according to pre-articulated theory or concept, or in a data-driven and concept-driven manner that combines both approaches (Schreier, 2012). Because identity development is a major developmental process for emerging adolescents, and conceptually quite compatible with the definition of a Gap Year as “an experiential semester or year ‘on,’ typically taken between high school and college in order to deepen practical, professional, and personal awareness” (American Gap Association, 2016b, n.p.), my research question investigating possible identity development during Gap Year participation was best answered using a primarily concept-driven approach to coding. However, as is often the case in QCA, I also took advantage of data-driven flexibility within the frame, and organized the data assigned to each of the concept-driven codes (Schreier, 2012). I used QCA to analyze a portion of AGA National Alumni Survey data in this manner to explore a potential breadth of identity development evidence within the Gap Year data. Given the lack of research directly addressing this connection between identity development and Gap Year programming, this research should contribute to early exploration of the connection.

### **Coding frame.**

The concept-driven coding frame I created to analyze responses to the question I selected from the AGA National Alumni Survey conceptualized the vectors of Chickering and Reisser's theory of identity development as a lens through which to assess possible identity development (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). Each of Chickering and Reisser's seven vectors of identity development are further described by aspects of development that contribute to growth in that area (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The categories of my coding frame were the two-, three-, four-, or seven-vector descriptions for each of the seven vectors. Some vectors contain descriptions that are fairly comprehensive; for example, the four descriptions of *Developing Competency* are intellectual, physical/manual, interpersonal, and overall sense of competence. However, other vectors contain less comprehensive descriptions, such as the descriptions of *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence*, which include emotional independence, instrumental independence, and acceptance of interconnectedness. Pilot testing of the frame showed that the vectors with less comprehensive descriptions needed an additional category to catch data that did not fit into particular vector descriptions, but did match the concept of the vector as a whole. For example, pilot testing illuminated a need for an overall code for *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence* in order to code responses that involved a move across those descriptions such as the vector title indicates, or, responses that indicated general independence that could not be parsed further as emotional or instrumental. To address this kind of movement, I added four codes to the frame for the four vectors that needed overall codes; *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence*, *Establishing Identity*, *Developing Purpose*, and *Developing Integrity*. Pilot testing also showed that the frame needed one further code for data that seemed to indicate identity growth, but did not fit neatly within a

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single vector category, such as “increased maturity.” See appendix C for the coding frame used for this research.

My coding frame was arranged according to vector descriptions to ensure uni-dimensionality by attempting to eliminate category repetition or misaligned or mixed dimensions within subcategories (Schreier, 2012). This arrangement helped direct the placement of data units so that subcategories were mutually exclusive, depending on the particular interpretation of data segments. For example, a data segment that indicated greater understanding of another culture could be considered intellectual competence or intercultural tolerance but, for the purposes of my study, it needed to be placed in only one category. I kept a decision journal to maintain as much consistency as possible in making such determinations.

Overall, this code frame design allowed the coding frame to be exhaustive by providing code categories for all but three units of data in the entire data set. Furthermore, because my frame was primarily concept-driven, I did not anticipate every category in the frame to have data coded for it. It was informative to me whether or not each conceptual category was filled with data. For example, two categories contained no data segments, while one category contained 568 data segments before further data-driven subdivision. Such placement of data was informative because it illuminated which areas of identity development survey respondents identified as most and least important. Categories did not need to be saturated to gain valuable insight from how the data filled out the frame (Schreier, 2012).

**Pilot phase.**

My coding frame underwent several pilot tests before I used it to code data. The coding frame was initially created according to descriptions of Chickering and Reisser’s identity vectors, as they appear in both Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) book and in Patton et al.’s (2016)



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summary chart of the vectors. I presented the frame as an appendix in the proposal for this research, and once the proposal was approved, met with a qualitative researcher to pilot the frame. This process began with a discussion about how I would segment data.

Segmenting is used to divide pieces of data into units that represent the different ideas contained within the larger piece of data. This is important for coding because it allows each idea within a piece of data to be coded and represented in the analysis (Schreier, 2012). Given that the purpose of QCA is to reduce large swaths of information according to units of meaning that can be analyzed (Schreier, 2012), segmenting data was important for my research. When we met, the researcher and I first segmented 13 pieces of data independently from one another, then compared our segmentation decisions by discussing the similarities and differences we encountered. We found that the majority of our segmentation differences revolved around what constituted units of meaning. For example, one piece of survey data we discussed together read,

Everyone needs to step out of their selves and do something that opens their eyes before college. If not, you aren't going to have your priorities straight and you're going to get drunk for four years, or not study, or participate in things that don't really matter to you.

The researcher divided the phrase according to the many ideas within it, while I saw the phrase as a whole as descriptive of *Developing Purpose* and I did not divide it at all. We decided together that it made the most sense to allow knowledge of Chickering and Reisser's vectors to inform how data were segmented. I segmented the 419 survey question responses later, on my own, bearing Chickering and Reisser's vectors in mind, but not consulting my coding frame directly. I avoided consulting the frame directly when segmenting because, while I did want the vectors to inform my decisions, I did not want to manipulate the data unduly. Each individual question response was considered a data quotation that might be segmented if it had more than

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one idea within it (Schreier, 2012). Some survey responses were several sentences long and contained several thoughts or ideas, and other responses contained lists of skills and knowledge acquired. These sentences and lists were split into different segments so that each discernable idea could stand alone. Where applicable, if the segmenting fractured a thought, I repeated the portion of the sentence that had been split away so that both segments made sense on their own.

In collaboration with the qualitative methodologist, I decided to employ ATLAS.ti, for qualitative data analysis, to assist my analysis work. We spent some time together pilot-coding data segments in the program, and discussing the rationales for various analytic decisions. This initial pilot run of the coding frame, which involved approximately 30 data segments, illuminated several difficulties in deciding where to place certain types of data segments that could be coded across multiple vectors. To address this problem, I met with a professor of higher education administration who teaches master-level courses on student development theory. This professor helped me to adjust some of the descriptions for vectors, and consider how I might parse between them. I ran examples of problematic data segments by him for consultation and adjusted conceptualizations of the coding frame.

After adjusting the coding frame and downloading ATLAS.ti, I ran a second pilot test of approximately 67 segments. This second test showed that it continued to be difficult to determine to which vectors data segments belonged. I began a decision journal to log decisions both during the pilot phase and afterwards, during the analysis phases. I consulted the decision journal frequently to maintain as much consistency as possible. The second pilot test also showed a need for a few additional codes to be added to the coding frame. I found that for several vectors, I kept encountering data segments that fit more than one of the descriptions within the vector. As a result, it was clear that while they fit in the vector, I could not categorize

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them appropriately. To address this problem, for the four vectors, *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence*, *Establishing Identity*, *Developing Purpose*, and *Developing Integrity*, I added a code for general indication of identity development according to that overall vector.

Data segments were coded according to the general codes if they fit two or more of the vector descriptions. In order to code every piece of segmented data somewhere, I also found the need to add a code for data segments that did not fit into any of the vectors in particular, though most did indicate general identity development. Once I completed these pilot tests I considered the coding frame ready for reliability and validity assessment.

### **Reliability and validity.**

Reliability and validity of QCA analysis are assessed by considering the coding frame for validity, and the coding process for reliability. The coding frame and coding process are considered reliable when data are consistently coded the same way either across different people or across time for one person (Schreier, 2012). A concept-driven coding frame is considered valid when the frame itself is shown to clearly and effectively represent the concept it is meant to analyze. This content validity of coding frame content can be assessed by an outside expert on the topic (Schreier, 2012).

I used content validity to assess the validity of my concept-driven coding frame. This assessment of validity was done by expert evaluation of how well categories in the coding frame represented Chickering and Reisser's identity development framework (Schreier, 2012). To ensure validity, I intentionally designed my coding frame to closely reflect Chickering and Reisser's identity development framework. Beyond this measure, the frame was evaluated by a professor with expertise on higher education administration and leadership. This expert provided feedback on how to distinguish between similar aspects of vectors. He also evaluated how well

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my coding frame represented Chickering and Reisser's work, and according to his expert opinion, the frame was "sturdy" and "appropriately covered the vectors" (V. Wesley, personal communication, February 14, 2017).

I evaluated the internal reliability of the final coding frame for consistency during the analysis process by building a time-lapse check into the coding process. I coded the majority of my data segments and then let them sit for a week before returning to the data to check for consistency. After waiting that full week, I re-coded a completely random section of 50 data segments in the middle of the data set, beginning on page 44 (closest to the data segment 1,000). As I re-coded, I confirmed that I was unable to remember how I had initially coded those data segments, providing a good reliability check on this second analytic pass. Out of the 50 segments I re-coded, only 7 were inconsistent with those coded the previous week. Three inconsistencies were re-coded within the same vector, and were the result of being either more or less specific, when I judged between an over-arching vector and a descriptive category within it. For three other inconsistencies, I found that in the initial coding I had coded according to the presence of particular terms that directly aligned with vector descriptions, rather than coding for the underlying concept of the segment, though I did the opposite when re-coding. Overall, I found the internal reliability of my coding to agree 86% of the time. Acceptable percentages of agreement can vary depending on type of analysis, and should be considered in light of how standardized the meaning of concepts might be (Schreier, 2012). Given the nature of my concept-driven frame based on a model of identity development that involves some conceptual overlap between vectors, the large data set I was working with, and that the inconsistencies I found were spread out across vectors, I believe 86% reliability to be a sufficient measure of a consistent coding frame according to QCA standards (Schreier, 2012).

**IRB approval.**

IRB approval was not needed for this research. I used pre-existing data which had been coded for participant anonymity before I received it. I did not have access to any respondent identifiers or coding key for this data (which were based on a nation-wide survey conducted in 2014 and 2015). Survey participants had agreed to take the AGA National Alumni Survey for Gap Year research purposes.

**Research Contribution**

While Gap Year programming is a growing phenomenon (American Gap Association, 2016d), research is limited, particularly in the United States (Hoe, 2014; O'Shea, 2014). For this reason, almost any research focused on the Gap Year concept makes a contribution to the research. My particular research is beneficial for the field of Gap Year research because it analyzed a substantial set of data for indications of identity development—a major developmental foci for emerging adolescents (Arnett, 2000; Astin et al., 2011; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1959/1980; Patton et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2005). Links have been made between Gap Year programming and benefits in the areas of identity development (American Gap Association, 2015; King, 2011; O'Shea, 2014), but I am unaware of any other systematic study like this one, particularly in the United States, that uses identity development research for the analysis. Chickering and Reisser's identity development framework is a comprehensive, well-known, and often-used theory in the field of emerging adolescent identity development research (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Foubert et al., 2005). I used it in this research to illuminate indicators of identity development in Gap Year alumni responses to an identity-oriented open-ended survey question.

## Chapter Four

### Review of the Findings

For this research, I analyzed AGA National Alumni Survey response data for the open-ended question, “What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?” Survey responses were segmented and coded according to a concept-driven coding frame that conceptualized the seven vectors of Chickering and Reisser’s identity development framework (1993). Out of 419 survey responses, 416 were segmented and coded according to the coding frame into a total of 1,881 segments. Each of these segments represented distinct ideas contained within survey responses. The 1,881 segments fit into all but 2 of the 30 coding frame categories. Analysis of the distribution of responses showed indication of identity development according to Chickering and Reisser’s framework across all seven vectors, with most segments falling under the *Developing Competence* vector, and the least number of responses coded for the *Managing Emotions* vector.

The survey question selected for analysis aligned most closely with the premise behind the *Developing Competence* vector. To some degree, the question “What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your gap Year?” elicited responses related to competencies gained during their Gap Year. For this reason, this question fit well with Chickering and Reisser’s identity development framework. This question also fit well in an analysis using Chickering and Reisser’s theory because the theory conceptualizes *Developing Competence* as a foundational element of identity development for emerging adolescents (1993).

This chapter reviews the findings of my research to answer the question, “What indicators of identity development are evident in the responses to an identity-oriented open-ended survey question on the American Gap Association National Alumni Survey?” The

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research design required each category in my coding frame to stand alone so that each segment of data could be assigned only one code. Thus, I was unable to code the dataset in a manner that could fully account for the constructive nature of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development. According to Chickering and Reisser's framework, *Developing Competence*, *Managing Emotions*, *Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence*, and *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* are initial developmental stages leading to *Establishing Identity*. *Developing Purpose* and *Developing Integrity* vectors show evidence of continued internalization and application of identity development (refer to chapter 2 for the constructive nature of this identity development theory). I took this constructive nature of Chickering and Reisser's theory into account when I analyzed coding results. Figure 2 depicts Chickering and Reisser's seven vectors and associated categories, with arrows showing basic constructive movements.

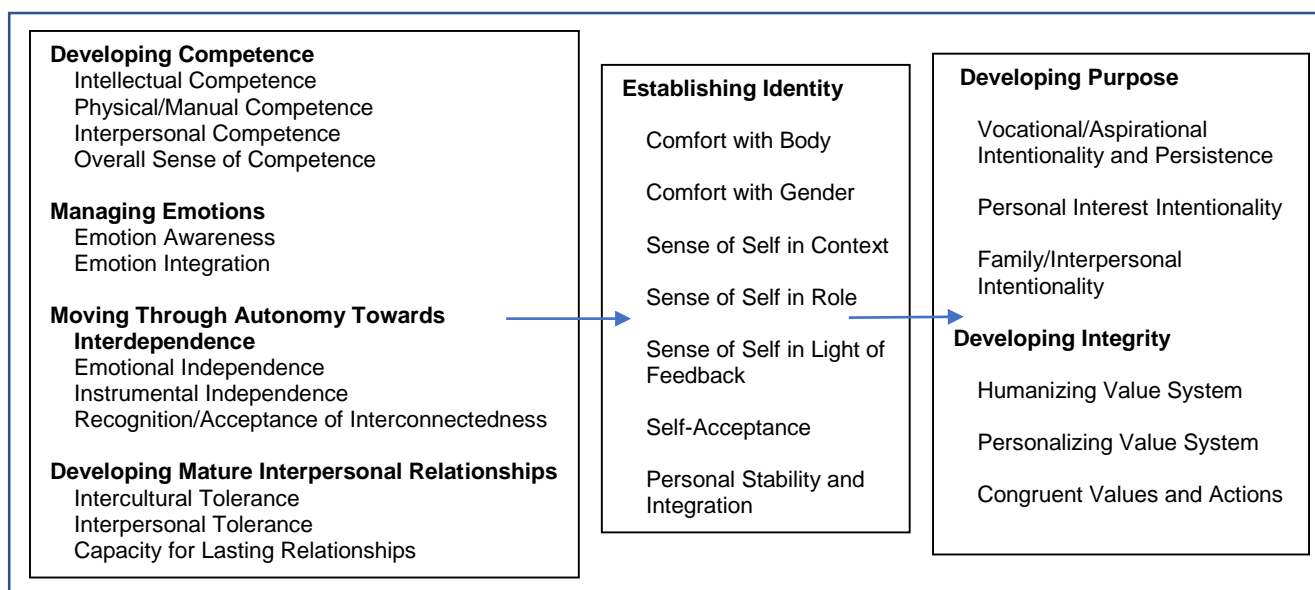


Figure 2. Chickering and Reissers Vectors and Categories. This figure displays Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework with vectors in bold type, and associated categories beneath in regular type. According to Chickering and Reisser's framework, the first four build to *Establishing Identity*, which then leads to *Developing Purpose* and *Developing Integrity*.

This chapter explores the range of identity development indicated in Gap Year alumni survey data by considering the coding results for each identity vector, arranged in the

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developmental order the vectors are presented in Chickering and Reisser's framework (1993).

Figure 3 reports the number of data segments coded according to each of the seven identity development vectors, arranged from the framework's foundational vectors (bottom) to those that build on them.

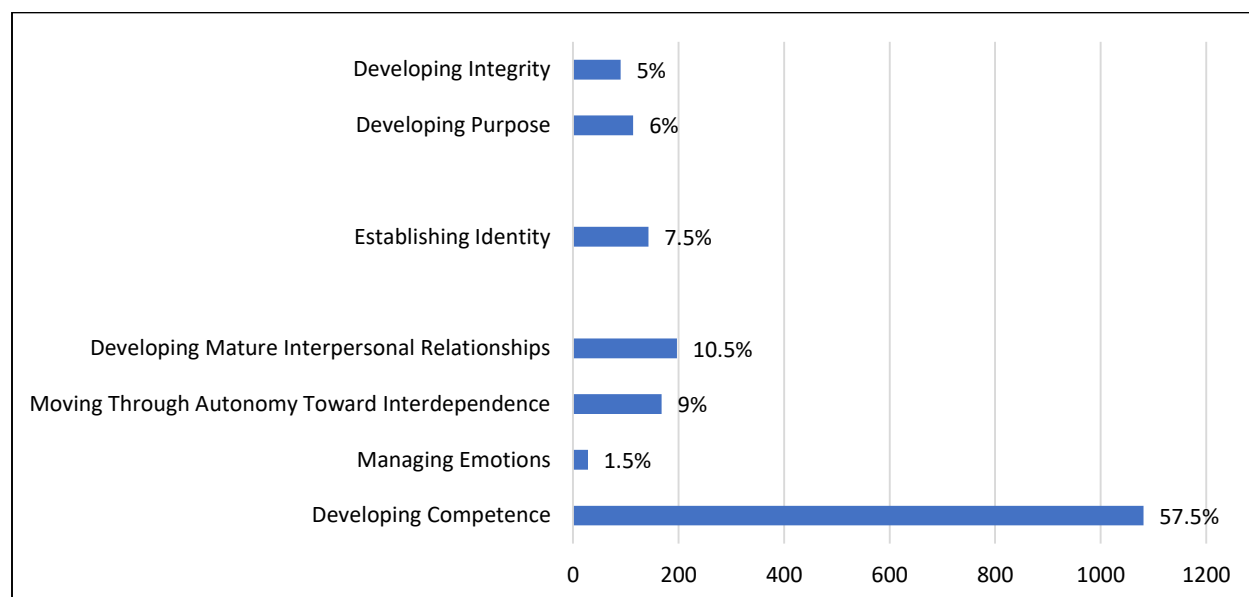


Figure 3. Code Frequencies by Identity Development Vector. This figure displays code frequencies of all seven identity development vectors, arranged by theoretical position in Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework, from bottom to top.

### Developing Competence

The *Developing Competence* vector, which recognizes intellectual, physical, interpersonal, and overall competence, aligned most closely with the survey question, "What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?" Coding results supported this alignment with 57.5% of all codes assigned to this vector. Overall, 1,081 out of a total of 1,881 data segments were coded as part of *Developing Competence*, which demonstrated potential identity development for Gap Year participants. Within the vector, 132 (12.2%) segments were coded as *Developing Intellectual Competence*, 165 (15.3%) were coded as *Developing Physical/Manual Competence*, 244 (22.6%) were coded as *Developing Interpersonal Competence*, and 540 (49.9%) were coded as *Overall Sense of Competence*. Table 1 outlines this



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distribution of data segments and provides explanations and examples for each descriptive category in the *Developing Competence* vector.

| Code Category                           | Code Count | Code Frequency in Vector | Code Frequency out of Total | Explanation of Descriptive Category  | Example of Descriptive Category  |
|---|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|--|
| DC.1- Intellectual Competence           | 132        | 12.20%                   | 7%                          | Skill using one's mind to learn content, intellectual/aesthetic sophistication, and the ability to understand, analyze, synthesize, reason, and think critically | "Middle Eastern politics"<br>"Asking deeper questions"<br>"How to lobby Congress"                                    |
| DC.2- Physical and Manual Competence    | 165        | 15.30%                   | 8.80%                       | Achievement in art and athletics, designing and making products, gaining strength, fitness, self-discipline, and pursuing leisure activities                     | "Knot tying"<br>"Outdoor skills"<br>"Pottery making"<br>"Cooking"<br>"Milk a cow"                                    |
| DC.3- Interpersonal Competence          | 244        | 22.60%                   | 13%                         | Ability to listen, cooperate, communicate, and collaborate effectively, and respond appropriately to others  | "Communication skills"<br>"Leadership skills"<br>"Public speaking"   |
| DC.4- Overall Sense of Competence       | 540        | 49.90%                   | 28.70%                      | Trust in abilities/stable, self-assurance, and the ability to receive feedback   | "Fluent in Spanish"<br>"Adaptability"<br>"Deep confidence"<br>"Budgeting"<br>"Professionalism"<br>"Take smart risks" |
| Developing Competence Vector in summary | 1,081      | 100%                     | 57.5%                       | N/A  | N/A  |

Table 1. *Developing Competence* descriptive categories with explanations and code frequencies. This figure provides an overview of each descriptive category in the *Developing Competence* vector, complete with explanations, examples, and various frequency counts for each.

### **Intellectual competence.**

*Intellectual Competence* is the descriptive *Developing Competence* category that involves the skill of using one's mind to learn content, gain intellectual/aesthetic sophistication, and develop the ability to understand, analyze, synthesize, reason, and think critically (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). To make sense of the many segments coded in this category, I analyzed them by arranging them in three data-driven subcategories related to knowledge (61%), learning (17%), and understanding complexities (22%). As far as *what* knowledge respondents learned, Gap Year alumni referred primarily to knowledge about other cultures, historical events, and systems. Responses in this subcategory highlighted the culture and history of various countries, along with knowledge of political, religious, and educational systems outside their own experience. In terms of learning, alumni made reference to learning how to think critically and to the importance of "asking deeper questions." They also reported gaining skills that had impacts on their ability to learn better (such as how to conduct research). The final subcategory of alumni responses in the *Intellectual Competence* category showed evidence that some respondents gained recognition or understanding of complex concepts and issues by articulating experiential knowledge of world issues and considerations of how to respond to issues.

Taken as a whole, Gap Year alumni reported a wide range of *Intellectual Competence* gained through their Gap Year experiences along the lines of learning, knowledge, and grappling with complex topics, which is in line with Chickering and Reisser's (1993) explanation. The alumni responses represented in this descriptive category offer a possible contribution to the discussion in the literature about Gap Year programs as educational opportunities that enable students to learn deeply and experientially so as to be better equipped contributors to local and

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international society (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). Responses in this category also demonstrated possible identity development according to the initial stage of Chickering and Reisser's identity development framework.

### **Physical and manual competence.**

*Physical and Manual Competence* can be viewed as achievements in art and athletics, designing and making products, gaining strength, fitness, self-discipline, and pursuing leisure activities (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). Segments coded in this category relate to competence in a wide variety of physical and manual areas, ranging from cooking to hiking to learning the ukulele. Of the 165 responses in the *Physical and Manual Competence* category, 58% involved outdoor skills or physical activities. Roughly half of these specifically referred to backpacking and wilderness/outdoor skills, while others mentioned various technical outdoor skills and competencies in areas such as rock climbing and water sports. Other *Physical and Manual* competencies mentioned by respondents included cooking, construction-related skills, and craftsmanship skills such as pottery-making and jewelry-making. Respondents also described a wide variety of traditional and practical competencies such as harvesting chickens, driving, and even wielding a machete. Gap Year alumni thus reported noteworthy indicators of *Physical and Manual Competence* such as those described by Chickering and Reisser (1993), with 8.8% of all responses demonstrating achievements in athletics, designing and making products, and presumably gaining strength and fitness when pursuing leisure activities during their Gap Year.

### **Interpersonal competence.**

*Interpersonal Competence* can be described as an ability to listen, cooperate, communicate, collaborate effectively, and respond appropriately to others (Chickering &

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Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). Of the 244 segments in this descriptive category, a full 27% mentioned “communication skills.” Beyond this, respondents described learning cross-cultural and large-group communication skills, as well as making gains in general social and interpersonal skills. Another aspect of *Interpersonal Competence*, that of acquiring leadership skills, appeared in 13% of the data segments in this category, and an additional 11% referred to the ability to work in a group or team. Respondents reported learning how to negotiate and work through conflict with others, and how to live in close quarters with other people as a result of their Gap Year experiences.

As a part of the *Developing Competence* vector, *Interpersonal Competence* is a building block for further growth, particularly interpersonally. Among Gap Year alumni, 13% of the 1,881 responses fit this *Interpersonal Competence* category. Skills such as communication skills, and the ability to listen, collaborate, and respond appropriately to others should help further identity development for emerging adolescents, in part because these skills are necessary for developing healthy relationships which are then also a part of continued identity growth according to other developmental vectors (Chickering & Reisser, 1993).

### **Overall sense of competence.**

*Overall Sense of Competence* was described on my coding frame as a trust in one’s own abilities or gaining a stable self-assurance, as well as the ability to receive feedback (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Patton et al., 2016). Beyond this description, this category held various descriptions of confidence and competence, as well as for competencies that contained elements ranging across the domains of intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competence. A very large number of 540 data segments (28.7% of all segments) fit into this category, which I further

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subdivided into three data-driven themes as I analyzed data segments: personal competence (49%), language competence (28%), and technical or work-related competence (23%).

Items coded as aspects of personal competence within the *Overall Sense of Competence* descriptive vector category were developed skills such as traveling, budgeting, and adaptability, since these all demonstrated competence across intellectual, physical, and interpersonal competency. Among the 1,881 survey response segments, 14% fell into this subcategory, with many respondents expressing confidence to travel in unfamiliar places safely and with acumen. Many respondents also mentioned new abilities related to budgeting and managing money, and gains in overall confidence and life skills. Beyond these general references, several alumni mentioned growth in their ability to solve problems, to self-evaluate, and learn from mistakes. Responses in this subcategory demonstrated a general sense of confidence in abilities that might translate beyond the specific skill, with some respondents describing a growing sense of adventure and feeling able to assess risks and “step outside their comfort zone.”

I coded language competency as part of an *Overall Sense of Competence* because it involves using intellect (*Intellectual Competence*) to communicate better with others (*Interpersonal Competence*), and it thus incorporates more than one descriptive *Developing Competence* vector category. Of the 1,881 survey responses, 8% mentioned competency in language, with references to “language skills” competency, various levels of Spanish language proficiency, and competency in other specific languages such as Hebrew, Hindi, and Wolof.

The final group of segments in the *Overall Sense of Competence* category referenced specific technical or work-related competence, with 7% of all segmented responses in this data-driven subcategory. Many responses in this subcategory included references to an increase in job skills and professionalism. Beyond these general descriptions, numerous respondents

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mentioned agriculture and teaching skills, while others mentioned a wide variety of other vocational competencies such as midwifery, writing, and structural analysis.

The *Overall Sense of Competence* that inspires trust in one's abilities, stable self-assurance, and an ability to receive feedback (Chickering & Reisser, 1993) was evident across the large number of Gap Year alumni responses coded in this category. According to Chickering and Reisser, a sense of competence in one's abilities influences self-concept and capacity to continue to take risks, learn from experiences, and grow in other areas. The responses coded in this category seemed to indicate Gap Year alumni experienced gains in developing identity according to the initial stages of Chickering and Reisser's theory of emerging adolescent identity development. In this light, a response such as, "jumping out of a plane isn't so scary," seemed to illustrate a lesson these emerging adolescents learned. This is noteworthy considering this development is in the earlier part of the identity development journey and these students might need to conquer additional fears in the future, to continue to grow according to the other six identity vectors, and in life beyond.

### **Managing Emotions**

Indication of identity development according to the *Managing Emotions* vector, which describes awareness and appropriate response to emotions, was least evident in survey responses as compared with the other six vectors. Only 28 (1.5%) of 1,881 data segments were coded as relating to emotions, with 25% of those assigned to the category of *Emotion Awareness*, which involves the recognition and acceptance of emotions, and 75% in the category *Emotion Integration*, which is the appropriate expression, control, and response to feelings (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Table 2 outlines this distribution of data segments and provides explanations and examples for each descriptive category in the *Managing Emotions* vector.

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| Code Category                       | Code Count | Code Frequency in Vector | Code Frequency out of Total | Explanation of Descriptive Category                       | Example of Descriptive Category                 |
|-------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|
| ME.1- Emotion Awareness             | 7          | 25%                      | 0.40%                       | Recognition and acceptance of emotions                    | "I learned how I react to fear and frustration" |
| ME.2- Emotion Integration           | 21         | 75%                      | 1.10%                       | Appropriate expression, control, and response to feelings | "Patience"<br>"How to be happy"                 |
| Managing Emotions Vector in summary | 28         | 100%                     | 1.5%                        | N/A   | N/A   |

Table 2. *Managing Emotions* descriptive categories with explanations and code frequencies. This figure provides an overview of each descriptive category in the *Managing Emotions* vector, complete with explanations, examples, and various frequency counts for each

In terms of *Emotion Awareness*, seven segments mentioned that individuals developed emotional literacy and learned to accept how they felt in situations. *Emotion Integration* was evident in 12 responses that described learning patience, indicating that a few alumni made gains in the appropriate control and response to emotion in situations that might have been difficult. Remaining responses described an ability to respond better to fear, and learning how to be happy in situations. Given the low frequency of codes in this vector, the significance of findings in the *Managing Emotions* vector is limited in terms of indicating alumni identity development according to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development.

### Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence

For *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence*, indication of identity development was apparent within various categories of the vector, particularly with regard to developing independence. This vector describes development that moves from stages of independence, marked by separation and individuation, to a stage of interdependence, marked by a sense of what individuals can offer one another. There were 168 data segments coded in this

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| Code Category  | Code Count | Code Frequency in Vector | Code Frequency out of Total | Explanation of Descriptive Category  | Example of Descriptive Category   |
|--|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| ATI.1- Emotional Independence                                    | 9          | 5.4%                     | 0.50%                       | Independence from the need for reassurance, affection, and approval of others            | "Confident and powerful on my own"<br><br>"How to deal with homesickness"                         |
| ATI.2- Instrumental Independence                                 | 61         | 36.3%                    | 3.20%                       | Independence such as self-direction, problem-solving, and mobility                       | "Confidence to travel alone"<br><br>"Creating my own schedule"<br><br>"Time management"           |
| ATI.3- Developing Interconnectedness                             | 27         | 16%                      | 1.40%                       | Recognition and acceptance of need for interdependence and interconnectedness            | "Networking"<br><br>"Much greater appreciation for the global community"                          |
| ATI- Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence Overall      | 71         | 42.3%                    | 3.80%                       | Evidence across categories, or of the process going from autonomy toward interdependence | "Independence"<br><br>"Self-reliance"<br><br>"How to successfully live on my own without parents" |
| Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence Vector in summary | 168        | 100%                     | 8.9%                        | N/A  | N/A   |

Table 3. *Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence* descriptive categories with explanations and code frequencies. This figure provides an overview of each descriptive category in the *Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence* vector, complete with explanations, examples, and various frequency counts for each.

vector, constituting 8.9% of all segments. Within this vector, 5.4% of the segments indicated *Emotional Independence* from the need for reassurance, affection, and approval of others, and 36% of the segments indicated *Instrumental Independence* such as self-direction, problem-solving, and mobility. Sixteen percent of this vector's segments indicated *Developing Interconnectedness* with the recognition and acceptance of the need for interdependence and interconnectedness, and 42.3% of the segments were either too broad conceptually to fit into a



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single descriptive category of this vector or represented progressive development across the vector. Though this vector describes moving through independence to interdependence, I found far more references to independence than interdependence in my data; the vast majority of the segments coded in the *Overall* category described concepts of independence and self-sufficiency. Table 3 outlines the distribution of data segments and provides explanations and examples for each descriptive category in the *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence* vector.

The nine segments coded as indicators of *Emotional Independence* referred to learning how to think independently without needing the approval of others, to conquering homesickness, and to feeling powerful on one's own. There were more references to *Instrumental Independence* in the data segments, with 3.2% of all segments referring primarily to the ability to travel and live independently, and to manage time independently. There were fewer references in the data to *Developing Interconnectedness*, with 1.4% of all alumni respondents reflecting on this area of development, primarily regarding learning the importance of connecting with others. Alumni mentioned networking connections they made with people across the country and the world, as well as understanding more deeply how interconnected the world is. These respondents also appeared to consider implications of interconnectedness by describing how their actions had impacts on others near and far, and the importance of asking others for help, because "deep down we all want each other to succeed."

One survey response coded in the *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence* vector described how an alumnus learned "self-reliance, but also when to ask for help and support from peers." This is the process that the vector describes as a whole, though most alumni referenced the first aspect in their reflections: that of gaining independence. Segments that referenced development in this vector as a whole, or that described development across

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multiple categories within the vector, were coded in this vector's *Overall* category. Out of all segments, 3.8% were in the *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence Overall* category, with many indicating gains in independence that could not be parsed as solely *Emotional* or *Instrumental Independence*. Many of these responses simply said "independence," with others mentioning being able to live independently and being self-sufficient. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), the object of the *Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence* vector is to move through independence to a personally stable ability to connect with and rely on others. Indicators of this identity development in my data were heavy in the first portion of this identity development vector, with approximately 80% of responses referencing independence and autonomy, as opposed to interconnectedness. This difference might indicate developmental activity in the vector, but activity that remains incomplete.

### **Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships**

Gap Year alumni survey respondents indicated growth in *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* with an overall frequency of 197 (10.5%) of all codes. This vector involves two stages of growth, first with gains in intercultural and interpersonal tolerance, marked by acceptance and appreciation of others who are different. The second stage of growth in this vector is a capacity for deeper, lasting relationships marked by honesty and unconditional acceptance. Only 8.1% of the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* segments were coded as *Capacity for Lasting Relationships*, while 59.4% of response segments in this vector indicated *Intercultural Tolerance* and 32% indicated *Interpersonal Tolerance*. Table 4 outlines the distribution of data segments in these categories, and provides explanations and examples for each descriptive category in the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* vector.

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| Code Category   | Code Count | Code Frequency in Vector | Code Frequency out of Total | Explanation of Descriptive Category  | Example of Descriptive Category   |
|---|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| MR.1- Capacity for Lasting Relationships                        | 16         | 8%                       | 0.90%                       | Capacity for healthy/lasting relationships with close friends/partners that embrace honesty, responsiveness, unconditional acceptance/ regard/interaction between equals           | "Relate in a meaningful way with everyone else (honestly)"<br>"Relationship building"           |
| MR.2- Intercultural Tolerance                                   | 117        | 59.50%                   | 6.20%                       | Awareness and appreciation of differences and commonalities, and openness/objectivity/ acceptance of individuals in other cultures for who they are (rather than stereotypes/bias) | "Cultural awareness"<br>"Cultural sensitivity"<br>"Global perspective"<br>"Cultural rituals"    |
| MR.3- Interpersonal Tolerance                                   | 64         | 32.50%                   | 3.40%                       | Awareness and appreciation of differences and commonalities, and openness/objectivity/ acceptance of others for who they are (rather than stereotypes/bias)                        | "Empathy"<br>"Less judgmental of others"<br>"Finding strengths in others"<br>"Other lifestyles" |
| Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships Vector in summary | 197        | 100%                     | 10.5%                       | N/A  | N/A   |

Table 4. *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* descriptive categories with explanations and code frequencies. This figure provides an overview of each descriptive category in the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* vector, complete with explanations, examples, and various frequency counts for each.

Gap Year alumni indicated the greatest degree of *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* in the *Intercultural Tolerance* category, with 6.2% of all segments falling in this category. *Intercultural Tolerance* is an awareness and appreciation of differences and commonalities, and openness, objectivity and acceptance of individuals in other cultures for who they are rather than according to stereotypes, bias, or subjectivity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). These respondents described an increase in cultural understanding and awareness, and increased

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global awareness. Respondents also expressed a new global perspective, and increased cultural sensitivity, demonstrated by respect for other cultures and the people in them; such as,

I know what sheep intestines taste like, and how the Milky Way looks from a mat on the desert sand in a tiny village with no electricity... I know what evening prayers to Allah sound like in Arabic. Ahhh, I could go on and on.

Such responses demonstrated cultural appreciation, described perspective shifts, and shared sentimental descriptions of newfound cultural appreciation such as this almost poetic reflection.

Out of all survey respondents, 3.4% described *Interpersonal Tolerance* gains over the course of their Gap Year experience. *Interpersonal Tolerance* is an awareness and appreciation of differences and commonalities, and openness, objectivity and acceptance of others for who they are rather than according to stereotypes, bias, or subjectivity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Response segments in this category indicated growing awareness of different people and different lifestyles, and increased open-mindedness, respect for, and acceptance of others. Respondents also described an increased ability to interact with and relate to others, and to live better in community with others. Interestingly, 16% of all codes in this category referred to empathy. The tone of the segments of this category indicated Gap Year participants spent time getting to know people who were different than they were, and were aware that personal differences were positive and beneficial.

The *Capacity for Lasting Relationships* involves capacity for healthy and lasting intimate relationships with close friends and partners that embrace honesty, responsiveness, and unconditional acceptance, regard, and interaction between equals (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Of the 16 responses coded in this category, 8 indicated general growth in the ability to build relationships, with the others describing friendships of depth, as well as learning how to open up

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to others and tell others how much they mean to them. Along this last vein, one respondent articulated a more romantic aspect of this, having “learned that love waits for you to get home.” Taken as part of the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* vector as a whole, responses indicating development within the *Capacity for Lasting Relationships* category were limited.

A relatively large number of Gap Year alumni responses (10.5% of all responses) were coded according to the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* vector, primarily in the initial developmental stages of tolerance. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), tolerance and understanding others are the groundwork for *Capacity for Lasting Relationships*, making it a notable finding that 92% of the responses in the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* vector were in the two categories of increased tolerance—*Intercultural Tolerance* and *Interpersonal Tolerance*. Responses indicate alumni might have experienced initial gains in identity development according to this vector during their Gap Year.

### **Establishing Identity**

The *Establishing Identity* vector is a culmination of identity development work individuals undergo in the prior four identity vectors. This vector pulls together various aspects of identity development that demonstrate a better understanding of and comfort with one’s own interior life, as well as how one interacts with the world (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Of all data segments, 143 (7.5%) fit the *Establishing Identity* category in response to the question “What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?” None of these segments belonged to the *Comfort with Body* or *Comfort with Gender/Sexual Orientation* codes. Of the segments coded for *Establishing Identity*, 9.8% indicated *Sense of Self in Context*, which encompasses a sense of self in one’s own social, historical, and cultural heritage and context, and 9.8% were coded as *Sense of Self in Role* which considers a clear self-concept and secure sense

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| Code Category                            | Code Count | Code Frequency in Vector | Code Frequency out of Total | Explanation of Descriptive Category  | Example of Descriptive Category                           |
|--|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| EI.1- Comfort with body                  | 0          | 0                        | 0                           | Comfort with body and appearance   | N/A   |
| EI.2- Comfort with gender                | 0          | 0                        | 0                           | Comfort with gender and sexual orientation                                 | N/A   |
| EI.3- Sense of Self in Context           | 14         | 9.80%                    | 0.70%                       | Sense of self in own social, historical, and cultural heritage/context     | "Who I am as a Jew"<br>"Appreciation for the life I live" |
| EI.4- Sense of Self in Role              | 14         | 9.80%                    | 0.70%                       | Clear self-concept and secure sense of self in role and lifestyle          | "Awareness of my role in the world"                       |
| EI.5- Sense of Self in Light of Feedback | 2          | 1.30%                    | 0.10%                       | Sense of self in light of feedback (from loved ones)                       | "Laughed at myself along with the rest of my village."    |
| EI.6- Self-Acceptance                    | 7          | 4.90%                    | 0.40%                       | Self-acceptance and self-esteem  | "Ability to embrace my quirks and awkwardness"            |
| EI.7- Personal Stability and Integration | 41         | 28.70%                   | 2.20%                       | Personal stability and integration   | "My strengths and weaknesses"<br>"How to follow my heart" |
| EI- Establishing Identity Overall        | 65         | 45.50%                   | 3.50%                       | Evidence across categories or of general reference to identity development | "Who I really am"<br>"How to be myself"                   |
| Establishing Identity Vector in summary  | 143        | 100%                     | 7.5%                        | N/A  | N/A   |

Table 5. *Establishing Identity* descriptive categories with explanations and code frequencies. This figure provides an overview of each descriptive category in the *Establishing Identity* vector, complete with explanations, examples, and various frequency counts for each.

of self in one's role and lifestyle. *Sense of Self in Light of Feedback* was indicated by 1.3% of segments in this vector, 4.9% indicated *Self-Acceptance* and self-esteem, and 28.7% of segments showed evidence of *Personal Stability and Integration*. Of the segments in this vector, 45.5% indicated *Overall* identity development that could not be further parsed according to the

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descriptive categories. Table 5 outlines this distribution of data segments and provides explanations and examples for each descriptive category in the *Establishing Identity* vector.

The 14 segments coded as *Sense of Self in Context* indicated increased spiritual reflection, and reflection of personal cultural context through a new perspective, sometimes with greater appreciation for personal upbringing. Responses in this category also showed an acceptance of self in the greater context of the world; for example, one alumna wrote about learning to “accept that (their) white skin will never allow (them) to blend in.” Increased *Sense of Self in Role* was shown in responses where respondents reflected on their role in the world and in modern society, and had a greater understanding of how they could help others through the roles they were in. The two responses that showed evidence of *Sense of Self in Light of Feedback* indicated respondents had been accepted by overseas hosts, such as the respondent who mentioned laughing at themselves after making a mistake “along with the rest of (their) village.” In a similar vein, the seven responses that indicated *Self-Acceptance* described an increased sense of will-power and self-respect, and “ability to embrace (their) quirks and awkwardness.”

*Personal Stability and Integration* were demonstrated by the 2.2% of all respondents who mentioned realizing their passions, discovering their strengths, and learning how to “follow (their) heart.” These respondents articulated that they felt free to explore new or rediscovered passions such as traveling, volunteering, and learning, after their Gap Year experience. They also described a confidence to discern and explore their strengths and passions, as well as being at peace with not knowing the future or having free time.

Many of the responses coded in the *Establishing Identity* vector could not be further parsed into the *Establishing Identity* descriptive categories. Responses in the *Establishing Identity Overall* category described an appreciation of time for self-reflection that allowed

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alumni to become more self-aware. Respondents also reported realizing who they are, and learning how to be themselves in the Gap Year context. These *Overall* descriptions of identity development constituted nearly half (45.5%) of all segments in the *Establishing Identity* vector, which is already somewhat of a catch-all vector with four preceding vectors contributing to it (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). Segments in this vector were difficult to parse further into *Establishing Identity* categories, and thus were difficult to describe concisely, with 3.5% of all data segments in the *Establishing Identity Overall* category. Analysis of the segments in the *Establishing Identity* vector shows some alumni recognition of identity development, with a limited number of responses fitting neatly into Chickering and Reisser's category descriptions.

### **Developing Purpose**

There was indication of identity development in Gap Year alumni responses according to the *Developing Purpose* vector, particularly in terms of finding vocational and aspirational purpose. This vector describes increased intentionality and persistence toward goals that can be related to vocation, personal interests, and interpersonal commitments. This is one of the culminating stages in Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework, and is dependent on previous developmental gains in foundational vectors. The coding count for the *Developing Purpose* vector was 114 (6.1%) segments, with 44.7% of those segments indicating *Vocational/Aspirational Intentionality and Persistence*, indicating increased intentionality and persistence towards vocational goals, plans, and aspirations. Of the *Developing Purpose* codes, 14% described *Personal Interest Intentionality* with increased intentionality, goals, plans, and commitment to personal interests and activities, 1.8% indicated *Family/Interpersonal Intentionality* with increased intentionality and persistence in interpersonal and family commitments, goals, and plans, and 39.5% demonstrated *Developing Purpose Overall*, or across



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the description codes. Table 6 outlines this distribution of data segments with explanations and examples for each descriptive category in the *Developing Purpose* vector.

| Code Category   | Code Count | Code Frequency in Vector | Code Frequency out of Total | Explanation of Descriptive Category   | Example of Descriptive Category  |
|---|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| DP.1- Vocational/ Aspirational Intentionality and Persistence | 51         | 44.70%                   | 2.70%                       | Intentionality and persistence towards vocational goals, plans, and aspirations (career work paid/unpaid, and life calling) | "TEFL certification"<br>"More driven to go to college..."<br>"Scuba diving! Which became my career"            |
| DP.2- Personal Interest Intentionality                        | 16         | 14%                      | 0.90%                       | Increased intentionality, goals, plans, and commitment to personal interests and activities                                 | "Unquenchable thirst for traveling"<br>"Lifelong interest in world music"<br>"Got to pursue goals in my sport" |
| DP.3- Family/ Interpersonal Intentionality                    | 2          | 1.80%                    | 0.10%                       | Intentionality and persistence with interpersonal and family commitments, goals, and plans                                  | "Learned I needed to break up with my boyfriend"   |
| DP- Developing Purpose Overall                                | 45         | 39.50%                   | 2.40%                       | Evidence across categories or general reference to greater sense of purpose   | "Grit" "Resilience"<br>"How to make the most of experiences"<br>"Knowing my goals"                             |
| Developing Purpose Vector in summary                          | 114        | 100%                     | 6.1%                        | N/A   | N/A  |

Table 6. *Developing Purpose* descriptive categories with explanations and code frequencies. This figure provides an overview of each descriptive category in the *Developing Purpose* vector, complete with explanations, examples, and various frequency counts for each.

Data segments indicated alumni development according to *Vocational/Aspirational Intentionality and Persistence*, with 2.7% of all data segments in this category. Responses in this category suggested that respondents gained greater understanding and direction for their future career paths, as well as a renewed desire to learn, after gaining purpose and direction through

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their Gap Year experience. Response segments also showed that several Gap Year participants acquired professional certifications that could lead to employment in certain vocational fields (such as Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Wilderness EMT). Also, six respondents said that they made occupational careers out of skills and aspirational purpose they developed during their Gap Year.

Respondents demonstrated an increased *Personal Interest Intentionality* with 16 responses that demonstrated a further intentionality pursuing interests such as traveling, scuba diving, and religion. Increased *Family/Interpersonal Intentionality* was demonstrated by two respondents, one of whom realized that one day they will want a family, and the other who understood the need to break up with a boyfriend.

Out of the 1,881 response segments, 2.4% demonstrated gains in skills and knowledge that indicated *Developing Purpose Overall* and could not be further parsed in the *Developing Purpose* vector categories. Respondents in this category described finding purpose, becoming more focused, and discovering and making personal goals. These respondents used words such as tenacity, resilience, and motivation to describe skills and knowledge they acquired during their Gap Year. Some alumni described renewed passion for life and adventure, and a desire to be less lazy. Other respondents described vigor to take advantage of opportunities and make the most of experiences, with one further explanation to “Seize every opportunity. Actually though, if you want to go on a wild spearfishing adventure with your homestay father and your best friend, DO IT! You’re only there once.”

In sum, particularly in the areas of *Vocational/Aspirational Intentionality and Persistence* and *Developing Purpose Overall*, alumni responses indicated *Developing Purpose* according to Chickering and Reisser’s identity development framework (1993). While the percentage of

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segments in this vector was a modest 6.5% of all 1,881 segments, gains in this vector assume development in other areas, making this finding worth further consideration.

### **Developing Integrity**

There were 90 data segments (4.8% overall) in this research that indicated possible identity development in the *Developing Integrity* vector according to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework. In some ways, this vector is a capstone of the entire framework, as it demonstrates internalization and subsequent application of consciously determined values. In this vector, 5.5% of responses were coded as being aligned with *Humanizing Value System*, with less rigid and moralistic values that balance the interests of others and self. *Personalizing Value System* with consciously affirmed values and respect for those of others was indicated in 30% of the responses coded in this vector, and another 27.8% of this vector's codes indicated *Congruent Values and Actions* with values and actions more congruent and authentic, balancing self-interest and social responsibility. In this vector, 36.7% of responses indicated *Developing Integrity Overall* that could not be further parsed or that spanned across vector descriptions. Table 7 outlines this distribution of data segments and provides explanations and examples for each descriptive category in the *Developing Integrity* vector.

The five response segments coded as indicators of increased *Humanizing Value System* primarily described greater appreciation for the value of communication and understanding others. In terms of the *Personalizing Value System* category, respondents described personalizing the values of working hard, honesty, and appreciating the important things in life. Respondents also described valuing people and a new appreciation for the value of education. With reference to the *Congruent Values and Actions* category, 1.3% of all 1,881 response segments indicated values that turned into action. One response seemed to summarize all survey

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| Code Category                          | Code Count | Code Frequency in Vector | Code Frequency out of Total | Explanation of Descriptive Category   | Example of Descriptive Category  |
|--|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|---|--|
| DI. 1- Humanizing Value System         | 5          | 5.50%                    | 0.30%                       | Humanizing value system (less rigid/moralistic) that balances interests of others and self          | "World issues relating to racism"<br>"World issues relating to human rights"<br>"Work ethic"         |
| DI.2- Personalizing Value System       | 27         | 30%                      | 1.40%                       | Personalizing value system with consciously affirmed values, and respect for those of others        | "Value education"<br>"Honesty is the best policy"  |
| DI.3- Congruent Values and Actions     | 25         | 27.80%                   | 1.30%                       | Values and actions more congruent and authentic, balance of self-interest and social responsibility | "I became a better global citizen"<br>"I am an agent of change"<br>"Involvement in social movements" |
| DI- Developing Integrity Overall       | 33         | 36.70%                   | 1.80%                       | Evidence across categories or general reference to increased sense of integrity                     | "Humility"<br>"Compassion"<br>"Knowing how I want to live my life"                                   |
| Developing Integrity Vector in summary | 90         | 100%                     | 4.8%                        | N/A   | N/A  |

Table 7. *Developing Integrity* descriptive categories with explanations and code frequencies. This figure provides an overview of each descriptive category in the *Developing Integrity* vector, complete with explanations, examples, and various frequency counts for each.

responses coded in this category well, "I learned who I was as a contributor to the world around me." Other respondents mentioned becoming better global citizens, volunteering, and gaining greater civic awareness. Respondents also described investing in politics and voicing personal opinions, as well as becoming involved in social justice movements and deepening convictions that their actions mattered.

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*Overall Developing Integrity* was indicated in responses that mentioned integrity, character, and responsibility. These individuals described realizing how they wanted to live their lives better, and contemplating who they wanted to be so as to “be a better person overall.” Respondents mentioned humility, compassion, and learning how to love others more deeply. According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), developmental gains in the *Developing Integrity* vector build on development according to previous vectors. With 4.8% of all responses, the categories that represent growth in *Developing Integrity* were not as populated by survey response segments as some other vectors, but they remain worthy of further consideration because this vector builds on the identity development gains of other vectors.

### **Indication of General Identity Development**

Some data segments, particularly those segmented from within larger units of data, did not fit well within the coding frame. Of all 1,881 segments, 3% were coded in their own group representing *General Identity Development* that did not fit in any identity development vector category. Most of these segments did not fit vector categories because they could not be assigned to just one category, such as responses that reported increased maturity and greater awareness. Respondents also mentioned an increase in perspective and open-mindedness, without context for further categorization. Items coded in this category were interesting to consider in terms of identity development, though they did not correspond directly to any of Chickering and Reisser’s vectors. Out of the 60 data segments coded in this category, the 16 (almost 1% of all segments) that mentioned increased maturity and the 9 (approximately 0.5% of all segments) that mentioned increased awareness ought to be recognized, because they were mentioned by several respondents and could indicate development in several different vectors, though they could not be categorized according to any specific vector.

## Conclusion

In summary, 1,881 AGA National Alumni Survey response data segments were coded according to identity development vectors described by Chickering and Reisser (1993). This was a substantial set of data to work with as I sought to answer the research question, “What indicators of identity development are evident in the responses to an identity-oriented, open-ended survey question on the American Gap Association National Alumni Survey?” The nature of this research was not to determine *if* there is a connection between Gap Year programming and identity development; rather it was to explore a connection that had already been noted in limited interview research of foreign Gap Year participants (Bagnoli, 2009; King, 2011, 2012), and, to consider carefully possible development implications within a greater collection of research that highlights the personal growth that foreign and American Gap Year participants often describe (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; Hoe, 2015; King, 2011; O’Shea, 2014).

Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) identity development framework was well-suited for this exploration. It remains a widely-known framework that captures significant aspects of emerging adolescent identity development in a format easily adaptable to a coding frame for analysis. Many data responses elaborated on competencies developed, which was to be expected given the nature of the survey question analyzed, though all identity development vectors were represented in the survey responses to different degrees. Analysis of data using Chickering and Reisser’s identity development framework showed indicators of alumni-perceived gains through Gap Year experiences. These indicators lay primarily in initial stages of identity development, with some data segments in the later stages.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

#### Introduction

This research employed Qualitative Content Analysis (Schreier, 2012) to explore indications of identity development in Gap Year alumni responses to an identity-oriented, open-ended survey question. Data segments were coded according to a coding frame that conceptualized Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven identity development vectors. Each vector was represented in the coding frame by code categories that described the identity development of that vector. I explored indications of identity development in alumni responses by considering the frequencies and the content of segments across the vector categories of the coding frame. This examination allowed me to answer the research question I articulated at the beginning of this project; "What indicators of identity development are evident in the responses to an identity-oriented, open-ended survey question on the American Gap Association National Alumni Survey?"

Analysis of responses to the question, "What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?" showed indications of identity development across all seven vectors of Chickering and Reisser's framework (1993). The framework was helpful for exploring and considering implications of various indicators of identity development present in alumni responses. This chapter discusses research findings, offers possible implications, lists limitations of this work, and offers suggestions for future study.

#### Discussion of the Findings

According to Chickering and Reisser (1993), the *Developing Competence*, *Managing Emotions*, *Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence*, and *Developing Mature*

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*Interpersonal Relationships* vectors are developmental stages that contribute to *Establishing Identity*, a synthesis and discernment of self. Development according to these five vectors is followed by *Developing Purpose* and *Developing Integrity*, which demonstrate integration and application of the previous identity development gains (See Figure 4 for a visual of this developmental framework).

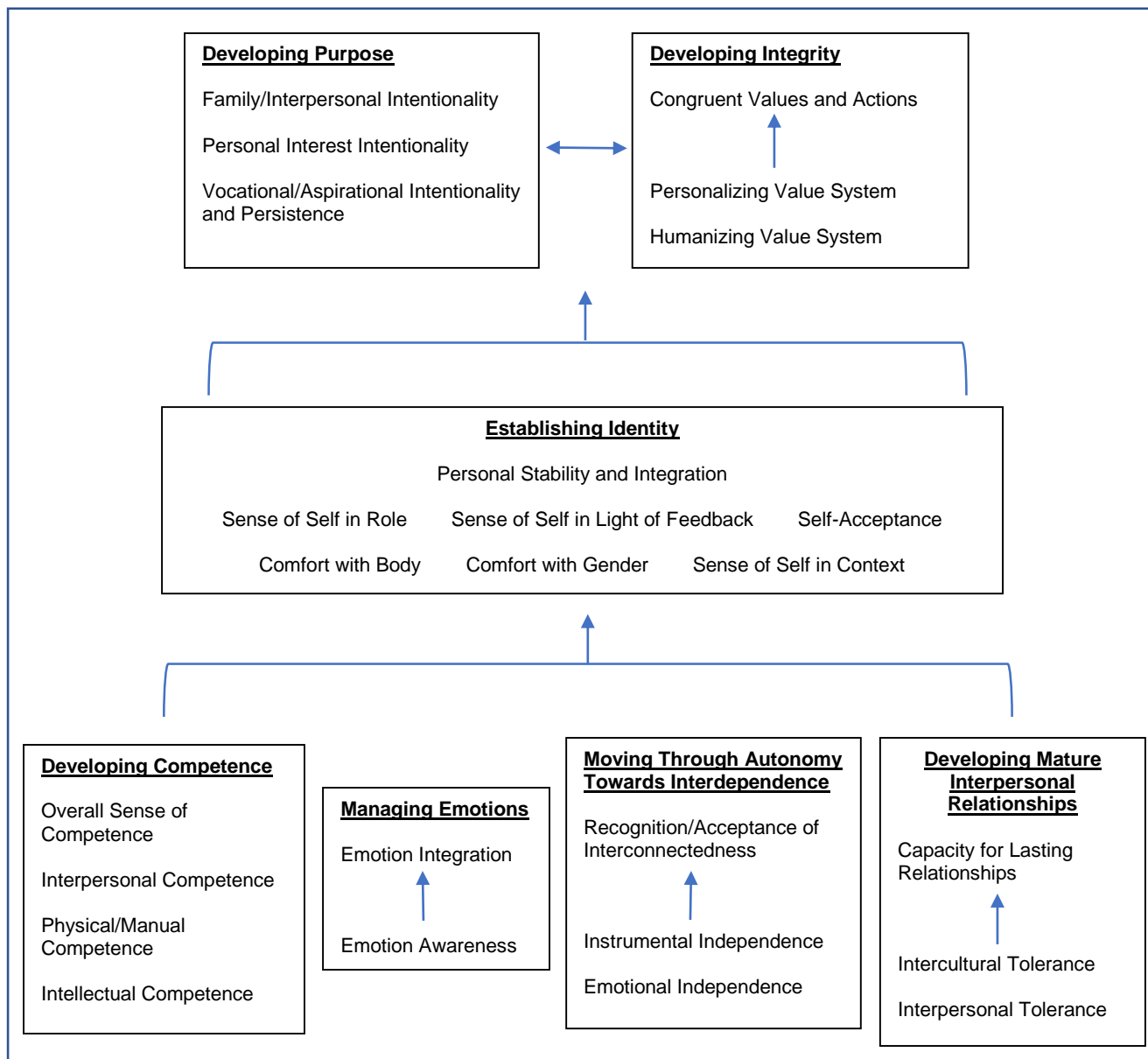


Figure 4. Chickering and Reisser's Vectors and Categories, in Action. This figure displays Chickering and Reisser's (1993) seven vectors and the categories within each as I articulated them in my research. Arrows indicate development that progresses from one stage or group of stages to the next, though such progression is not always linear and can overlap.



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The *Developing Competence* vector was particularly helpful for indicating identity development in this study, with over half of all data segments coded within the category. This suggested that Gap Year alumni had experiences that contributed to intellectual, physical, interpersonal, and overall confidence in their ability to handle situations and accomplish goals. Analysis of survey data indicated alumni-perceived gains in initial stages of identity development. Less frequent, but conceptually significant, responses that referenced *Developing Purpose* and *Developing Integrity* also indicated alumni-perceived gains in identity development according to this framework.

### **Indicators of initial identity development.**

As individuals gain competence they feel free to take risks, learn from mistakes, and learn and grow with others who are also in the process of learning and growing (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; O'Shea, 2014). Gains in competence can be accessed by individuals for continued development, such as *Self-Acceptance* in the *Establishing Identity* vector, increased intentionality toward various goals associated with the *Developing Purpose* vector, and intentionally living out *Congruent Values and Actions* as part of *Developing Integrity*. Thus, the high number of responses in this study that referred to gains in *Developing Competence*, whether physical, manual, or overall, indicated initial, foundational, identity development according to Chickering and Reisser's framework as a whole.

In the *Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence* vector, approximately 80% of responses indicated increased independence, with only 20% indicating interconnectedness. This is noteworthy given the progressive nature of this vector whereby individuals make gains in independence and self-sufficiency before connecting with others out of a better understanding of their own place in the community and the world. As individuals realize their own autonomy,

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they become more aware of autonomous others, and consider how to interact and engage with them (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The high concentration of data responses in the initial stages of this vector indicated that Gap Year alumni might have been engaged in initial processes of identity development in the *Moving Through Autonomy Towards Interdependence* vector.

Similarly, my analysis showed a concentration of responses in the initial stages of identity development within the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* vector. In this vector, *Capacity for Lasting Relationships* is theoretically gained after developments in tolerance and acceptance. This developmental stage is important for emerging adolescents as a shift from conforming to others' expectations for approval, to appreciating (tolerating) differences in others, and eventually developing deep relationships based on authenticity and mutual trust. Out of authentic relationships, individuals' personal identities continue to stabilize (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erickson, 1959/1980). Only 8% of Gap Year responses coded in this vector indicated *Capacity for Lasting Relationships*, with 92% of responses falling into the *Interpersonal Tolerance* and *Intercultural Tolerance* categories. This suggested that alumni were engaged in the initial processes of identity development according to the *Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships* vector during their Gap Year.

### **Indicators of comprehensive identity development.**

My analysis also suggested alumni-perceived gains in *Developing Purpose* and *Developing Integrity*, the capstone identity development vectors dependent on development in previous vectors. Though 6% and 4.8% of all responses were coded as evidence of *Developing Purpose* and *Developing Integrity*, the stage-progression nature of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory implies that references in these categories demonstrate a certain level of identity development gains in other areas as well. The responses coded in *Developing Purpose* and

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*Developing Integrity* referenced increased tenacity, compassion, and dedication to live a life of meaning. It seems noteworthy that alumni responses showed perceived comprehensive identity development, as described in Chickering and Reisser's framework.

Chickering and Reisser's *Developing Purpose* vector involves assessing interests, intentionality with goals, and persistence through obstacles, each of which require accomplishments from prior vectors such as knowledge and competence, awareness of self and others, and personal stability. *Developing Integrity* is an interpretation of experience, and articulation of values that guide behavior. These abilities are dependent on identity development of previous vectors with competencies and critical thinking, awareness of emotions, understanding of others, independent yet empathetic thinking, and a stable sense of self (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). With a combined total of 10.8% of all data responses categorized according to these capstone vectors, it seemed reasonable to consider these responses indicative of some level of comprehensive alumni identity development.

### **Implications of this Research**

#### **Implications for Student Development professionals.**

Student Development professionals focus on a holistic perspective of student learning and growth, and regularly explore ways to facilitate the developmental growth of students (American Council on Education, 1937; Patton et al., 2016; Williamson et al., 1949). Identity development is the primary developmental task of emerging adolescents, the developmental stage of many traditional undergraduate students (Arnett, 2000). The alumni sample examined in this Gap Year study articulated identity development as a result of their Gap Year experiences. Thus, this Gap Year research, and the Gap Year programming it focused on, might be one avenue for Student Development professionals to consider as they seek to help students grow.

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Results from the AGA National Alumni Survey report (2015) demonstrate that alumni consider their Gap Year to have prepared them personally, professionally, academically, and as global citizens. While personal growth was most recognized by alumni, 73% either agreed or strongly agreed that their Gap Year experience increased their readiness for college. To these ends, Student Development professional organizations might consider engagement with Gap Year program leaders as both groups seek to help college-track emerging adolescents grow and develop holistically.

This research suggests that Gap Year programming has potential as a developmentally appropriate and robust means of encouraging initial identity development in emerging adolescents before they enter college. Student Development professionals might capitalize on this foundational identity development of their students who participated in a Gap Year prior to college, and intentionally foster continued development of students in subsequent stages of identity development.

Because *Developing Purpose* and *Developing Integrity* are culminations of identity development, students might benefit from going to college with prior intentional development leading toward developing purpose and integrity. Given a national American graduation rate of only 60% for first-time, full-time undergraduates after six years (National Center for Education Research, 2016b), higher education professionals must consider how to encourage persistence towards accomplishing goals and aligning actions with values. At least one out of every ten responses in this research suggested Gap Year alumni-perceived gains in *Developing Purpose* or *Developing Integrity* during their Gap Year experience. According to the framework, such development not only indicates prior identity development, it also seems to support the oft-cited idea that Gap Year participants return to the classroom with purpose and integrity that should

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serve them well as emerging adolescents in college (American Gap Association, 2015; Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009).

**Implications for parents and students.**

Literature on Gap Year programming promotes Gap Year experiences as supplemental education that can serve to enhance personal development as part of a holistic educational experience (Haigler & Nelson, 2013; O'Shea, 2014; White, 2009). The concept of personal development can be elusive to parents and students. Identity development is a well-researched and significant personal developmental process for emerging adolescents. This study corresponds with the Gap Year literature by naming identity development work that might be gained through Gap Year programming. This research is important for parents and students because it reveals alumni-perceived indicators of foundational identity development that might occur through Gap Year experiences. Such programming is not well-known or utilized by American students, despite some Ivy League colleges promoting and funding Gap Year experiences for students before they enter college (Fitzsimmons et al., 2011; Princeton University, 2016). This research further describes aspects of Gap Year programming that demonstrate programming potential as a viable alternative to the traditional high school to college trajectory for students. Parents and students ought to pause to consider the option.

**Limitations of the Research**

Several limitations to this research were identified at the outset. One was the criticism of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework as less applicable to minority populations than majority populations (American Gap Association, 2015; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Pope, 2000). The framework is also general in nature, and not as able to identify nuances of identity development in the wide range of ways social identity theories are able to do (Brown, 2000;

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Patton et al., 2016). Nonetheless, most Gap Year participants are from majority populations, including the participants in the AGA National Alumni Survey (American Gap Association, 2015), making Chickering and Reisser's framework acceptable for this research. Another limitation was that the question responses I analyzed did not directly address identity development, though it was conceptually linked to an identity development framework. Furthermore, because data were analyzed using Chickering and Reisser's identity development framework, data-driven categories were not as evident within the analysis. This was part of the research design, which looked specifically for indicators of identity development.

Several limitations to this research arose beyond those described at the outset. The anonymous nature of the AGA National Alumni Survey meant that I could not follow up with respondents to understand better the scope of their Gap Year experience. I do not know what the implications of the distribution methods might be. Survey links were distributed by Gap Year program leaders and through social media, and respondents elected to answer approximately 70 questions at-will. I could not thus extrapolate responses as universal for all Gap Year participants. A further limitation also existed in the segmentation of responses within the data set, which was necessary for analysis according to an identity development framework, but which decontextualized segments from their respondents. In general, the limitations to this research revolved around the research design, which was intentionally designed to explore data for particular concepts.

**Suggestions for Future Study**

The large set of AGA survey data and the adaptability of Chickering and Reisser's (1993) framework allowed for a reasonable initial approach to explore identity development potential in Gap Year programming. This study showed that further research focused on the identity

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development potential of Gap Year programming might be beneficial. Such research might use surveys or interviews to ask Gap Year participants direct questions related to possible changes in dispositions and identity development. Questions could be informed by the conclusions of this research, or by additional identity theories. This research was limited to Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory by the methodology, but a further comprehensive approach might incorporate several different theories of identity development that could lend themselves well to research—such as Baxter Magolda's (2001) work on self-authorship, Marcia's (1966) identity states in terms of commitment and exploration, emerging frameworks that integrate multiple dimensions of identity (Patton et al., 2016), and Chickering and Reisser's theory. When I designed this study, I appreciated aspects of each of these, particularly Baxter Magolda's research, and would have liked to have incorporated more of these into my study. Work would need to be done to conceptualize such theories into a format that might be adaptable for deeper exploration of identity development in Gap Year participants.

A longitudinal or comparative study would also be helpful for further consideration of possible Gap Year identity development. By focusing on responses to a single open-ended question, this research was a snapshot glimpse meant only to explore indicators of a concept within a specific data set. While this study suggested indicators of identity development that Gap Year alumni considered themselves to have gained through their Gap Year experience, this research could not distinguish whether gains occurred because of the Gap Year experience. Further study should include a longitudinal study and/or comparative study to clarify developmental gains over time, and consider any differences between development that might occur through a traditional undergraduate experience versus a Gap Year.

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Finally, the ethics of volunteer work is spawning a growing set of research that should be considered further in relation to Gap Year programming. While my study did not highlight implications of volunteer work, many alumni responses referred to working with people of other cultures, exposure to world issues, and the desire to work for change in the world. Given these indications of global interaction and references to volunteer work, I believe that further exploration should consider what volunteer experiences look like, which are most effective for student growth, and which are most effective for benefiting local populations. Literature on negative implications of Volunteer Tourism is concerning (Guttentag, 2009; Illich, 1968; Lyons et al., 2012; McGehee & Andereck, 2009; Sossou & Dubus, 2013). For these reasons, I believe Gap Year programming must be proactive by considering how to best meet the needs of all individuals involved; volunteers and locals. Further exploration might also compare possible identity development gains between Gap Year students who volunteer overseas and those who only travel overseas. Comparison might also be made between identity development gains of students who volunteer locally during a traditional freshman college experience and students who volunteer overseas.

**Conclusion**

As part of a holistic approach to higher education, Gap Year programming has potential to encourage student maturation in a developmentally-appropriate way. While there are many aspects of development that could occur through a Gap Year experience, I chose to explore the concept of identity development, because it is a primary developmental focus for emerging adolescents (Arnett, 2000; Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1959/1980).

Through this Qualitative Content Analysis of Gap Year alumni survey data, using Chickering and Reisser's framework to conceptualize identity development, I found indications



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of alumni-perceived gains primarily in initial stages of identity development, with some development in later stages dependent on development in initial stages. While this was a snapshot-glimpse of alumni reflections, the indications of identity development warrant continued and more comprehensive exploration of the identity development potential of Gap Year programming.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Copy of AGA National Alumni Survey as Seen by Respondents



Institute for Survey Research  
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY\*

**By taking this survey you may enter to win a \$50 Amazon gift card. TWENTY randomly selected winners will be awarded gift cards at the close of this survey.**

Thank you for your interest in our research on former American and Canadian Gap Year participants! We hope you will share some information about yourself and your experiences that will help us better understand the benefits of Gap Year experiences and how to improve future programs. For more information about [Gap Year research sponsored by the American Gap Association](#), please [click here](#).

Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used and to the extent allowed by law. No absolute guarantees can be made regarding the confidentiality of electronic data. Information will be used solely for the purpose of learning about the overall experiences of Gap Year participants like yourself. Information will be reported in statistical summary form only; no data on individuals will be reported. If you would like to be eligible to win an Amazon gift card, you will need to enter your email address. Your email address will not be used for any other reason but to contact you if you win!

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, but is important for us to be able to generate an accurate profile of the experiences of Gap Year participants. For more information about participating in this research study, please see our [Gap Year Survey Information Sheet](#). This survey should take approximately 15 minutes. Thank you in advance!

#### What is a Gap Year?

A Gap Year, also referred to as a Bridge Year, is a structured period of time when a student takes an intentional break from formal education. A Gap Year experience can last anywhere from two months to two years and can take place between high school and college, during college, or between college and an advanced degree. Typical Gap Year activities might include traveling, volunteering, interning, or working.

*This survey was created by Nina Hoe, PhD as a graduate student at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education and as Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute for Survey Research at Temple University. For questions about this survey or any of the content, please contact Nina Hoe directly at [nina@temple.edu](mailto:nina@temple.edu). For more information on Nina's Background and credentials, [click here](#).*

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## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

Do you agree to take this survey and be a part of our Gap Year research?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

A **Gap Year**, also referred to as a Bridge Year, is a structured period of time when a student takes an intentional break from formal education. A Gap Year experience can last anywhere from two months to two years and can take place between high school and college, during college, or between college and an advanced degree. Typical Gap Year activities might include traveling, volunteering, interning, or working.

Based on this definition, did you take, or participate in a Gap Year/Bridge Year?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

At the time of your gap year, were you a citizen of the U.S. or Canada?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

## Your Background Information

If you would like to be eligible to win a \$50 Amazon Gift Card, please enter your email address here (optional).

If you would like to provide your name, please do so here (optional).

When were you born?

Month

Day

Year

Birthdate

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

What is your current student and employment status?

|                   |                       |                       |                                     |   |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Student Status    | Full-time Student     | Part-time Student     | Not a Student (Applying to Schools) | Not a Student (Not Applying to Schools Now) |
|                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>               | <input type="radio"/>                       |
| Employment Status | Full-time Employed    | Part-time Employed    | Not Employed (Looking for Work)     | Not Employed (Not Looking for Work)         |
|                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>               | <input type="radio"/>                       |

What is your gender identification?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

What is your race?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Other
- ☐ More than one race

Are you of Hispanic origin? (trace origin or descent to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America, or other Spanish cultures)

- ☐ Yes

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

☐ No

Is English your native language?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Were your parents born in the U.S.?

☐ Both of my parents were born in the US

☐ One of my parents was born in the US

☐ Neither of my parents was born in the US.

At the time of your Gap Year, what is the highest level of formal education obtained by your parents?

|   | Mother                   | Father                   |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do not know parent's education level                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Did not complete high school                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| High school diploma or equivalent                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vocational or technical training                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Less than two years of college                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Associate's degree                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 or more years of college but no degree            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Bachelor's degree                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Some graduate school courses but no graduate degree | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Master's degree or equivalent                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professional degree (M.D., D.O., D.D.S, J.D., etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Doctoral degree or equivalent (Ph.D)                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

When you began college, were your parents...?

- ☐ Married or remarried
- ☐ Living together/domestic partners
- ☐ Single
- ☐ Divorced or separated
- ☐ Widowed
- ☐ Other/Unsure

When you took your Gap Year, what is your best estimate of your parents' combined annual income?

- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$124,999
- ☐ \$125,000 - \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 - \$174,999
- ☐ \$175,000 - \$199,999
- ☐ \$200,000+
- ☐ Not sure/don't want to say

## Your Gap Year

Did you participate in a commercial Gap Year program(s) (i.e. Global Routes, City Year, NOLS, Global Citizen Year)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

When did you take your Gap Year?

☐ Between high school and college/postsecondary education

☐ Between high school and career (no college)

☐ During college/postsecondary education (took a leave of absence)

☐ After college/postsecondary education (before starting graduate school or career)

Which factors influenced you to take a Gap Year? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ My college counselor or high school mentor encouraged me to take a Gap Year.
- ☐ I wanted to travel, see the world, and experience other cultures.
- ☐ I wanted to explore different career paths and/or figure out what type of career I wanted to pursue.
- ☐ I wanted to figure out what I wanted to study in college/postsecondary education.
- ☐ My college of choice gave me the option, or encouraged me to take a Gap Year.
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I wanted to contribute meaningfully by volunteering.
- ☐ I wanted to gain work experience.
- ☐ I wanted to learn another language.
- ☐ I wanted to take a break from the traditional academic track.
- ☐ I wanted to gain life experiences and grow personally.
- ☐ My parents or peers encouraged me to take a Gap Year.
- ☐ My college of choice required me to take a Gap Year.
- ☐ I was not admitted to the colleges or grad schools that I wanted to attend.



## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

Please indicate the activities or experiences you took part in during your Gap Year. (Check all that apply.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being in a new and different environment  | <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in adventure activities              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meditating, doing yoga, or exploring spirituality   | <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in cultural training or courses      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forming relationships with my peers (also on a gap year)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Partying   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forming relationships with others in the places I visited (local families, children, new friends) | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting a cause                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forming relationships with staff from my program  | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking courses for academic credit                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having unstructured/down-time   | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking courses not for credit                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interning   | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking language courses or training                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Journaling  | <input type="checkbox"/> Traveling – independently                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping in touch with friends and family using social media                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Traveling – structured, with a group and/or leader |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living in a Homestay  | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering/doing service work                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Managing my own budget  | <input type="checkbox"/> Working (for pay)                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participating in environmental activities   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="text"/>                         |

Please indicate 5 of these activities or experiences that most positively contributed to your learning and growth during your Gap Year. Drag these 5 elements to the column on the right, and place them in order of importance.

Items:

Aupairing

Being in a new and different environment

Meditating, doing yoga, or exploring spirituality

Forming relationships with my peers (also on a gap year)

Forming relationships with others in the places I visited (local families, children, new friends)

Forming relationships with staff from my program

Having unstructured/down-time

Interning or Apprenticing

Journaling

Keeping in touch with friends and family using social media

Living in a Homestay

Managing my own budget

Participating in environmental activities

Participating in adventure activities

Participating in cultural training or courses

Partying

Supporting a cause

5 Important Experiences During  
My Gap Year

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

Taking courses for academic credit  
 Taking courses not for credit  
 Taking language courses or training  
 Traveling – independently  
 Traveling – structured, with a group and/or leader  
 Volunteering/doing service work  
 Working (for pay)  
 Working for exchange (WOOFing, etc.)

How many months did you spend on your Gap Year?

Months on gap year

How many months did you spend outside of the U.S. on your Gap Year?

Months spent out of U.S.

How many countries other than the U.S. did you visit during your Gap Year?

Countries visited

Please select the 3 countries in which you spent the greatest amounts of time during your Gap Year? Include the U.S. if applicable. (Note: If you only spent time in 1 or 2 countries, please leave the 2nd and 3rd country BLANK.)

Gap Year destination  
country 1

Gap Year destination  
country 2

Gap Year destination  
country 3

For how many weeks during your gap year did you participate in 30 hours or more of service work?

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

What is your best estimate of the TOTAL COST of your entire Gap Year?

- ☐ Less than \$1,000
- ☐ \$1,000 - \$4,999
- ☐ \$5,000 - \$9,999
- ☐ \$10,000 - \$19,999
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 or more
- ☐ I don't know/remembers

How did you finance your Gap Year? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ I paid, using my own money.
- ☐ My parents paid.
- ☐ I received money from another private source (other family member, friend, etc.)
- ☐ I received scholarships.
- ☐ I borrowed money/used student loans.
- ☐ I fundraised.
- ☐ Other

Did you earn money during any portion of your Gap Year? If so, how much?

- ☐ \$0 - I did not earn any money during my Gap Year
- ☐ Less than \$1,000
- ☐ \$1,000 - \$4,999
- ☐ \$5,000 - \$9,999
- ☐ \$10,000 - \$19,999
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 or more
- ☐ I don't remember/don't want to say

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

Please indicate the extent to which to you agree or disagree with the following statements about your Gap Year.

My Gap Year experience...

|   | Strongly Agree        | Agree                 | Neither Agree<br>nor Disagree | Disagree              | Strongly<br>Disagree  |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Allowed me time for personal reflection.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped me develop as a person.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased my self-confidence.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased my maturity.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped me develop communication skills.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped me learn to interact with people from backgrounds different from my own. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped me find purpose in my life.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased my interest in attending college.                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased my "readiness" for college.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped me determine what I wanted to study in college.                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Influenced me to take foreign language classes.                                 | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Allowed me to place out of foreign language requirement in college.             | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased my chances of completing college.                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Will or has impacted my career decision.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped me acquire skills to be successful in my career.                         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped (or will help) me get a job  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Increased my interest in knowing people and places around the world.            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Inspired me to be more active in following global                               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

Please indicate the extent to which to you agree or disagree with the following statements about your Gap Year.

### My Gap Year experience...

|  | Strongly Agree        | Agree                 | Neither Agree nor Disagree | Disagree              | Strongly Disagree     |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| current events and politics.   |                       |                       |                            |                       |                       |
| Made me see myself as a global citizen.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helped me develop a greater understanding and/or respect for cultures and customs other than my own. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Instilled an appreciation for and belief in the importance of human rights.                          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Inspired me to be an active volunteer in my local community.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Inspired me to be an active volunteer in the global community.                                       | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Use this space to describe any other significant impacts that your Gap Year had on your life.

On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend taking a Gap Year to a high school student?

Not at all likely

Extremely likely

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please explain:


A screenshot of a presentation slide. It features a large, empty rectangular box in the center, likely intended for a diagram or image. On the right side of the box, there are two small, vertically stacked square buttons with upward and downward arrows. Below the box, there are two small square buttons with leftward and rightward arrows. The overall layout is simple and minimalist.

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

What skills or knowledge did you acquire as a result of your Gap Year?

The image shows a presentation slide with a large, empty rectangular area in the center. On the right side of this area, there are three small, vertically stacked square buttons with arrows pointing up, down, and left. At the bottom of the slide, there are two small square buttons with arrows pointing left and right. The entire slide is enclosed in a thin black border.

What was the most valuable experience you had during your Gap Year?



Were there any downsides to taking a Gap Year?

The image shows a portion of a web browser interface. At the top, there's a search bar with a magnifying glass icon on the right. Below it, a large white rectangular area occupies most of the frame, representing the main content space. To the left of this area are two small square icons: one with a left-pointing arrow and another with a right-pointing arrow. To the right of the main content area, there are three stacked square buttons: the top one has an upward-pointing arrow, the middle one is plain grey, and the bottom one has a downward-pointing arrow. The overall appearance is that of a simple, possibly older, web application or editor.

## High School Information

When did you graduate from high school (or complete your GED)?

Month

Year

High  
School  
Graduation  
Date (or  
GED  
Completion  
Date)

▼

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

What type of high school did you attend?

- ☐ Public Neighborhood
- ☐ Public: Charter
- ☐ Public: Magnet/Special Admission
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Other

Throughout high school, what was the average grade you received? (What was your grade-point-average?)

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <input type="radio"/> A (4.0)  | <input type="radio"/> C- (1.7)                            |
| <input type="radio"/> A- (3.7) | <input type="radio"/> D+ (1.3)                            |
| <input type="radio"/> B+ (3.3) | <input type="radio"/> D (1.0)                             |
| <input type="radio"/> B (3.0)  | <input type="radio"/> D- (0.7)                            |
| <input type="radio"/> B- (2.7) | <input type="radio"/> F (below 0.7)                       |
| <input type="radio"/> C+ (2.3) | <input type="radio"/> My high school did not award grades |
| <input type="radio"/> C (2.0)  | <input type="radio"/> I cannot remember                   |

Please mark which of the following math courses you completed in high school.

- ☐ Algebra II
- ☐ Pre-calculus/Trigonometry
- ☐ Probability/Statistics
- ☐ Calculus
- ☐ AP Probability and Statistics

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

☐ AP Calculus

What were your scores on the SAT and/or ACT? Leave BLANK if you did not take the test or if you do not remember your score(s).

|               | Your score           |
|---------------|----------------------|
| SAT Verbal    | <input type="text"/> |
| SAT Math      | <input type="text"/> |
| SAT Writing   | <input type="text"/> |
| ACT Composite | <input type="text"/> |
| Top of Form   |                      |

## Your College / Postsecondary Education Experience

When did you (or will you) begin college/your postsecondary education?

| Month                                   | Year                 |
|---|----------------------|
| College Start Date <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

At present, what is the highest degree you have attained?

- ☐ High school diploma or equivalent
- ☐ Vocational or technical training
- ☐ Less than two years of college
- ☐ Associate's degree
- ☐ 2 or more years of college but no degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Some graduate school courses but no graduate degree
- ☐ Master's degree



## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

- ☐ Professional degree (M.D., D.O., D.D.S, J.D., etc.)
- ☐ Doctoral degree (Ph.D)

Throughout college or postsecondary education, what was the average grade you received? (What was your grade-point-average?)

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> A (4.0)  | <input type="radio"/> D+ (1.3)   |
| <input type="radio"/> A- (3.7) | <input type="radio"/> D (1.0)  |
| <input type="radio"/> B+ (3.3) | <input type="radio"/> D- (0.7)   |
| <input type="radio"/> B (3.0)  | <input type="radio"/> F (below 0.7)  |
| <input type="radio"/> B- (2.7) | <input type="radio"/> My college or postsecondary institution did not award grades |
| <input type="radio"/> C+ (2.3) | <input type="radio"/> I cannot remember  |
| <input type="radio"/> C (2.0)  | <input type="radio"/> I did not attend college or a postsecondary institution      |
| <input type="radio"/> C- (1.7) |  |

How did you (or will you) finance your undergraduate education? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ , using my own money.
- ☐ paid.
- ☐ I received money from (other family member, friend, etc.)
- ☐ I received
- ☐ I borrowed money/used
- ☐ Other

How much did you or will you owe in student loans from your entire undergraduate education at the time of graduation?

- ☐ \$0 - I owed no money
- ☐ Less than \$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000 - \$49,999

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

- ☐ \$50,000 - \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$124,999
- ☐ \$125,000 - \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 - \$174,999
- ☐ \$175,000 - \$199,999
- ☐ \$200,000+
- ☐ Not sure/don't want to say

Which type of institution did you (or will you) first attend?

- ☐ 4-year
- ☐ 2-year
- ☐ Less-than-2-year

What was, is, or will be your enrollment status at your first institution?

- ☐ Full-time
- ☐ Part-time

Did you transfer at any point during your postsecondary education?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How many undergraduate institutions did/have you attended?

Number of Undergraduate Institutions

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

Did you study abroad during your undergraduate education?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Not yet - but I plan to
- ☐ No - I did not study abroad and I don't plan to

What is/was your undergraduate major?

Undergraduate Major

Have you taken any graduate school entrance exams? If so, please indicate your score. Leave BLANK if you did not take the test or if you do not remember your score(s).

|                            | Your Score           |            |
|----------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| GRE Verbal                 | <input type="text"/> | GRE Verbal |
| GRE Math                   | <input type="text"/> | GRE Verbal |
| GRE Writing                | <input type="text"/> | GRE Verbal |
| GMAT                       | <input type="text"/> | GRE Verbal |
| MCAT                       | <input type="text"/> | GRE Verbal |
| Other <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | GRE Verbal |

Top of Form

## Life Now

Did you vote in any election this November?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

☐ Don't know

Have you volunteered in the last 12 months?

☐ Yes

☐ No

How did you find out about this survey?

☐ From a friend or family member

☐ From the director or other staff member of a Gap Year program I participated in

☐ From a Gap Year program I did not participate in

☐ From the American Gap Association

☐ From Facebook

☐ Other

Anything else you would like to share about yourself, your Gap Year experience, or this survey/research project?



If you would like to share more about your experiences and stay connected to the Gap Year movement, please join the [AGA Facebook](#) page and the [AGA Website](#).

Thank you!

## **Appendix B**

### **Chickering and Reisser Identity Development Coding Frame**

#### **DC- Developing Competence**

(Competence: confidence one can handle what comes/accomplish goals)

DC.1 \*Intellectual competence- skill using mind to learn content, increased intellectual/aesthetic sophistication, and ability to understand, analyze, synthesize, reason and think critically

DC.2 \*Physical and manual competence- achievement in art and athletics, designing and making products, gaining strength, fitness, self-discipline, and pursuing leisure activities

DC.3 \*Interpersonal competence- ability to listen, cooperate, communicate and collaborate effectively, and respond appropriately to others

DC.4 \*Overall sense of competence- trust in abilities/stable self-assurance and ability to receive feedback

#### **ME- Managing Emotions**

ME.1 \*Awareness: recognition and acceptance of emotions

ME.2 \*Integration: appropriate expression, control, and response to feelings

#### **ATI- Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence**

ATI \* Indication of Moving Through Autonomy Toward Interdependence that cannot be further parsed

ATI.1 \*Emotional independence from need for reassurance, affection, approval of others

ATI.2 \*Instrumental independence such as self-direction, problem-solving, and mobility

ATI.3 \*Recognition/acceptance of need for interdependence and interconnectedness

#### **MR- Developing Mature Interpersonal Relationships**

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

MR.1 \*Capacity for healthy/lasting intimate relationships with close friends/partners that embrace honesty, responsiveness, unconditional acceptance/regard/interaction between equals

MR.2 \* Intercultural tolerance, awareness/appreciation of differences and commonalities, and openness/objectivity/acceptance of others for who they are (rather than stereotypes/bias/subjectivity)

MR.3 \* Interpersonal tolerance, awareness/appreciation of differences and commonalities, and openness/objectivity/acceptance of others for who they are (rather than stereotypes/bias/subjectivity)

### **EI- Establishing Identity**

EI \* Indication of Establishing Identity that cannot be further parsed

EI.1 \*Comfort with body, appearance

EI.2 \*Comfort with gender, sexual orientation

EI.3 \*Sense of self in own social, historical, and cultural heritage/context

EI.4 \*Clear self-concept and secure sense of self in role and lifestyle

EI.5 \*Sense of self in light of feedback (from loved ones)

EI.6 \*Self-acceptance and self-esteem

EI.7 \*Personal stability and integration

### **DP- Developing Purpose**

DP \* Indication of Developing Purpose that cannot be further parsed

DP.1 \*Increased intentionality and persistence towards vocational goals, plans, and aspirations (career work paid/unpaid, and life calling)

DP.2 \*Increased intentionality, goals, plans, and commitment to personal interests and activities

DP.3 \*Increased intentionality and persistence with interpersonal and family commitments, goals, and plans

### **DI- Developing Integrity**

DI \*Indication of Developing Integrity that cannot be further parsed

DI.1 \*Humanizing value system (less rigid/moralistic) that balances interests of others and self

## IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN AGA SURVEY RESPONSES

DI.2 \*Personalizing value system with consciously affirmed values, and respect for those of others

DI.3 \*Values and actions more congruent and authentic, balance of self-interest/social responsibility

**DF- Indication of General Identity Development**

DF \*Indication of Identity Development that cannot be further parsed

**Appendix C*****Copy of Developing Interpersonal Competence Analysis Using ATLAS.ti***

(PDF copy is formatted to fit an entire paper, and can be seen on next page)

# IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS IN KEY RESPONSES

