

COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS: EXPLORING RIGOR THROUGH RELEVANCE
AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ADOLESCENT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose for this study was to examine the relationship between adolescent identity development, relevance, and rigor among high school students. The premise under investigation is rooted in the concept of building rigor through relevance. Students who have engaged in personal exploration and commitment to certain ideological and interpersonal issues, specifically personal and occupational identity (Erikson, 1982; Marcia, 2002; Super, 1980) are purported to find increased relevancy in their coursework (Crumpton & Gregory, 2011) and in turn engage in more rigorous studies.

This cross-sectional study utilized quantitative methods to analyze archival survey, transcript, and performance data on student engagement in relevance, rigor, and identity producing activities (Fink, 2009). Findings of the study revealed students had positive experiences with adult guidance and support and career planning. Perceptions of career exploration experiences were reported low, however a lack of workplace experience was found as a key factor in that finding. Students in the study were found to have engaged in overall low levels of academic intensity which was consistent with the literature on academic rigor.

A key finding was that adolescent identity status matters in relation to academic rigor and relevance. Exploration of individual passions and interests followed by commitment to an occupational identity was found to be related to engagement in rigor and relevance.