



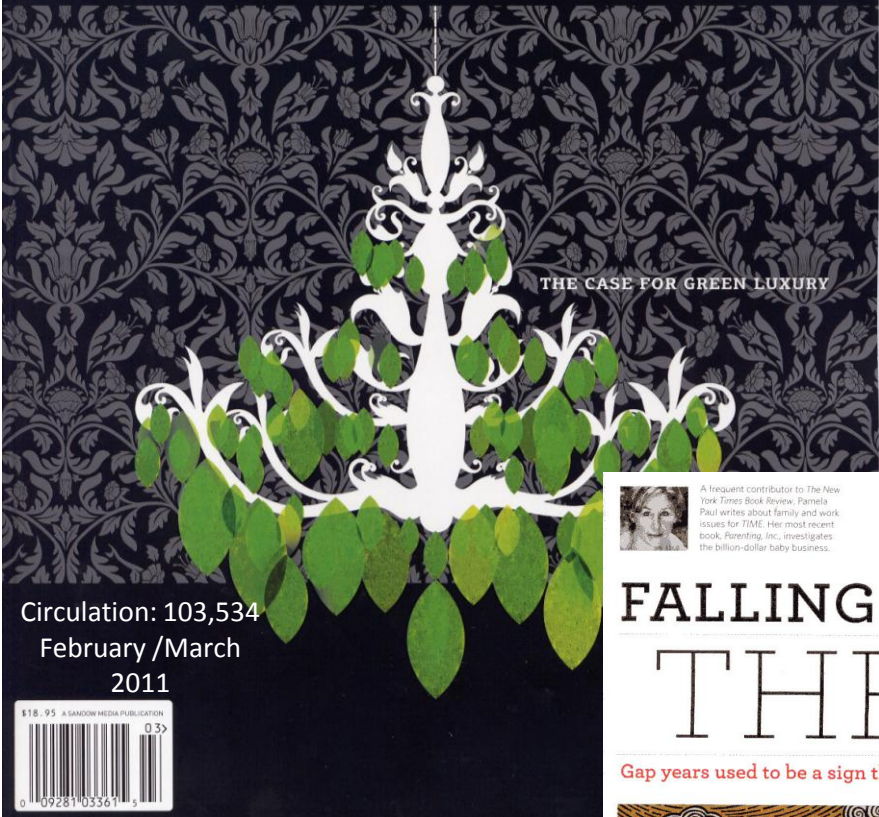
MAKE
Top hotel gyms; Warren Buffett's mysterious new #2; 10 questions for your office designer.

GROW
What the Republicans mean for your money; 2010's most expensive art sales; investing in wine.

LIVE
Eight eco-friendly luxury cars; 10 secret bars and restaurants. Plus: Should your kid skip school?

Worth®

THE EVOLUTION OF FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE



THE CASE FOR GREEN LUXURY

Circulation: 103,534
February / March
2011



A frequent contributor to *The New York Times Book Review*, Pamela Paul writes about family and work issues for *TIME*. Her most recent book, *Parenting, Inc.*, investigates the billion-dollar baby business.

EXPERT ADVICE  LIVE

FALLING INTO THE GAP

Gap years used to be a sign that your kid was in trouble. Not anymore.



One of the best decisions I ever made was to take a year off from my otherwise full-speed-ahead education to live in rural Thailand for a year. The worst decision I made was to take that year after college, rather than before.

Apparently today's high school grads are wiser than I was: Gap years—a year between high school and college—are becoming increasingly popular among American teenagers. At the Center for Interim Programs, the oldest gap-year consulting firm in the country, participation has risen sharply—20 percent over the

past decade. Programs have proliferated. Gap years, says *New York Times* columnist Ron Lieber “have become more mainstream” since his book on the subject, *Taking Time Off*, was published in 1996. Today, “they’re seen as an asset.”

That attitude is a far cry from the former perception of high school grads who take a year off as errant, un-recruited prep school jocks, reform school grads looking to buff a tainted record, or otherwise half-baked kids. “In the past, if you said you were doing a gap year, that meant you weren’t going to college,” says Thomas Pastorius Jr., vice president of

Projects Abroad, which places 1,200 American students in gap-year and other programs each year.

The change is partly the result of elite colleges encouraging hard-charging students to take a breath before entering, or even applying to, college. “You’ve got places like Harvard saying [to potential applicants], ‘Please take time off!’” explains Holly Bull, president of the Center for Interim Programs. “Schools are enthusiastic [about gap years] because studies keep showing that students who enter after a year off are more mature, more focused and less likely to party.”

When Mary Williams’ son Paul told her he was considering a gap year, the Hattiesburg, Miss.-based corporate trainer was initially concerned. Why would her valedictorian son sit out a year? “You worry about your child not going back to school,” Williams told me. But after Duke’s director of admissions urged Paul to consider the move, she says, “I felt much better.” Paul was only 16, having skipped a grade. “He’ll probably get a lot more out of college if he’s older,” his mother says.

Alec Yeh lived for a year in Senegal, working at a health clinic through Global Citizen Year, a social enterprise that coordinates programs for gap-year students in Asia, Africa and Latin America. He’s now a freshman at Harvard—but when he proposed a gap year, his parents were worried, even though he’d already been accepted to college. “They’re Chinese immigrants, and

thought that Harvard would look down on my taking a year off, when in fact, Harvard encourages it,” Yeh recalls.

Yeh, 20, is thinking about concentrating in economics, with a minor in global health. “There’s a big difference in how I approach school,” he says. “I focus a lot more on the content of what I’m learning and on why I’m learning it, rather than just doing the work.”

“Students are so over-programmed in high school, they’re exhausted,” says Lee Ann Afton, dean of admissions and financial aid at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tenn. Sometimes students just need a break, says Katherine Cohen, CEO of IvyWise, a college admissions counseling company. They also have the chance to make their mark outside of school. One of Cohen’s clients, now at Harvard, made more than \$200,000 working at a hedge fund. “Colleges are very supportive,” Cohen says.

So, kids—don’t go to college. Not yet. ☺

For more information, contact:

Center for Interim Programs
interimprograms.com
609.683.4300

Projects Abroad
projects.abroad.org
888.839.3535

Global Citizen Year
globalcitizenyear.org
415.963.9293

IvyWise, Katherine Cohen
212.262.3500

LIVE
GROW
MAKE
FALLING INTO THE GAP
By Pamela Paul