A rite of passage? Exploring youth transformation and global citizenry in the study abroad experience

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ABSTRACT
Travel, long recognised as a rite of passage, is often also touted as a transformative experience which facilitates cross-cultural understanding, fosters an embrace of diversity and promotes global awareness. This process is aligned with youth development and has a rich history in the tourism literature. The importance of transformational travel, however, has now spread to programmes across the higher education landscape, with the recognition that travel has the potential to nurture a global citizenry. Additionally, for many young people, the motivation for studying abroad is to assist in the transition to adulthood. In this way, educational travel is similar to an ‘overseas experience’ or a ‘gap year’. It is often taken at an important time of transition in emerging adulthood, for example, from school to work. We argue that this period of identity formation for youth can be likened to a rite of passage much like the Grand Tour of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was for young European men and women. Our paper examines the role of the study abroad experience in promoting youth transformation and global citizenry.

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Introduction
Temporary transnational moves have been increasingly seen as important in the transition to adulthood of young people in Western nations (Cairns, 2008; Thomson & Taylor, 2005; Yoon, 2014). It has been suggested that short-term youth expeditions, characteristic of study abroad experiences, closely mimic ‘rites of passage’ for young individuals who have the opportunity to learn about themselves (Bagnoli, 2009; Beames, 2004; King, 2011; Starr-Glass, 2016). This idea has been linked in recent years to the importance of study abroad experiences contributing to the development of a global citizenry (Tarrant, 2010). Our paper provides an initial exploration of the relationship between self and identity, global citizenship and educational travel for the 18–30-year-old demographic and links it back to the ideas found in the Grand Tour of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and van Gennep’s (1960) conceptualisation of the ‘rites of passage’ in an attempt to provide frameworks for future research.

With the rapid increase of youth participation in travel, we examine historical motives and hypothesised outcomes (i.e. global citizenship (Adamson & Ruffin, 2013; Cameron, 2013)) associated with international travel, and their similarities and differences with modern study abroad experiences. Specifically, we explore the extent to which modern educational travel can be linked to the early ideas of the Grand Tour and may have become the new rite of passage for youth in the twenty-second century. Youth competence in this society differs, however, status and identity may still be obtained through travel as a rite of passage. Our purpose here is to examine the links to provide a framework that, as Stoner et al. (2014) suggest, can be used to undertake research to provide evidence that the assumed outcomes of study abroad experiences, including changing self-concepts, are actually being achieved. Exploring the identity formation process in the context of global educational travel (GET) can yield recommendations for pedagogy that maximise student growth and learning, while identifying new questions and concerns for future research and practice.

In this paper GET refers to all overseas travel undertaken by enrolled undergraduate students for the purpose of study, and the global competencies (values, identities and knowledge) related to global citizenship, security and international relations, student engagement and work adaptability that stem from it. Although there has been increased participation in GET in recent years, the duration of students’ overseas stays has fallen dramatically (Dwyer, 2004; Institute of International
This context.

In nurturing a global citizenry (Dolby, 2007), we respect to the mission statements of universities and colleges, is in nurturing a global citizenry (Dolby, 2007). We see that an area in which such GET programmes perhaps have the greatest potential impact, particularly with respect to the mission statements of universities and colleges, is in nurturing a global citizenry (Dolby, 2007). We place our exploration of GET as a 'rite of passage' within this context.

Global citizenship

Tarrant et al. (2014) suggest that citizenship refers to a national identity with special rights and duties prescribed by the respective government; as such a global citizenry cannot be similarly characterised since there is no global government and/or few enduring international laws (Noddings, 2005). Though competing definitions of global citizenship abound (Davies, Evans, & Reid, 2005) there are three key dimensions (or obligations) which are now generally accepted in the literature: social responsibility, global awareness and civic engagement (Morais & Ogden, 2011). Schattle (2009, p. 12) proposes that global citizenship ‘entails being aware of responsibilities beyond one’s immediate communities and making decisions to change habits and behavior patterns accordingly’, while (Galston, 2001, p. 217) acknowledges that ‘it is reasonably clear that good citizens are made, not born. The question is how, by whom, and to what end?’

Cultural differences are an important part of global citizenship education and policy which seeks to promote the celebration of cultural differences. This is an ideology that has underpinned Australian government multiculturalism policies (Ozdowski, 2012) for the past two decades. Community and political leaders who espouse this ideal argue that it is central to the development of tolerance and acceptance that underpins community safety, and by extension, national security and enables Australians to engage fully in a global market economy (Modood, 2007; Ozdowski, 2012). However, both historic and recent national incidents of violence associated with race and cultural relations that have attracted national media attention, call into question whether such an ideal is little more than empty rhetoric. Acceptance of cultural diversity, a central tenet to global citizenry (Rubin, Landon, Tarrant, Stoner, & Mintz, 2016), clearly does not occur through a process of social osmosis but the nature of the active learning process that lead people to become global citizens is not well understood.

The nature, values, attributes and efficacy of global forms of identification and community are much debated and incorporate notions of cosmopolitan (Nussbaum, 1996) or transnational citizenship (Habermas, 2001) as well as global citizenship (Dower, 2000). The challenges posed by climate change, international population flow, cross-border exchanges and equitable distribution of international resources are undeniably global in scope and impact and challenge the very notion of a nationally bounded citizenry (Kofman, 2005). Indeed, it has been argued that in the twenty-first century the nation is no longer the exclusive framework for social, cultural and political identification (Banks, 2004, 2009).

According to these discourses, citizenship seems to be shifting scale, moving away from national affiliations and towards global forms of belonging, responsibility and political action.

International travel is potentially an important facilitator of global citizenship as it creates exchange between cultures and through the transfer of populations across states, regions and cultures accounting for over one-twelfth of world trade constituting by far the largest movement of people across borders. The impact of international tourism and global mobility is far-reaching across economic, social and cultural life. International and domestic tourism account for 10% of global employment and global GDP with 1186 million international passenger arrivals each year, predicted to reach 1.8 billion by 2030 (UNWTO, 2016). GET accounts for a small percentage of this but is growing rapidly.

Global educational travel

For many years now educators have been faced with a challenge to produce more socially and globally engaged students (Liang, Caton, & Hill, 2015). They have turned to modes of learning which span beyond the classroom, and as such the higher education landscape has incorporated experiential learning in its curriculum which includes field trips and internships. The GET (also known as study abroad or student exchange) phenomenon has formed part of this shift. Here it is noted that experiential learning is implicit within virtually all forms of travel (i.e. the very nature of boarding a plane and entering a foreign destination through customs is an experience in itself) and this inferred or assumed outcome has emerged over the past two decades in the tourism literature on the ‘experience economy’
(Larsen, 2007; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). However, it is experiential learning that goes beyond passive acquisition that is transformative. The structuring of experiential learning has been central to both formal experiential education programmes and the positive leisure movement (Larson, 2000). One of the shared features of such programmes has been the use of reflective learning (Moon, 2004) to bring about transformational outcomes.

Interest and growth in GET, and its link to global citizenship, is evidenced by developments at a number of social, political and institutional levels. In the USA, the bi-partisan Lincoln Commission (2005, p. 3) recognised that ‘what nations don’t know can hurt them…the stakes involved in study abroad are that simple. For their own future and that of the nation, it is essential that college graduates today become globally competent’. The Australian Government’s National strategy for international education 2025 (2016, p. 7) recognises that an international education offers opportunities to build enhanced bilateral and multilateral relationships, which increase cultural awareness and social engagement’. A primary mechanism for implementation of policy on global education has been investment in outbound mobility programmes for university students. In the USA, the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act (S. 3390) has established a target of one million US students studying abroad for credit, up from the current ~300,000. In Australia, initiatives such as the New Colombo Plan are expanding from a pilot phase to full implementation in the next few years with A $160 M committed to enable more than 10,000 Australian students to participate in outbound mobility programmes by 2019.

Since the first major data collection on Australian student outbound mobility was undertaken in 2005, the percentage of undergraduates who participate in these programmes during their degree programme has more than doubled, from 5% (Olsen, 2008) to 13.1% in 2012 (Australian Government, 2014). In the USA, 2013/2014 data showed 14.8% of undergraduate students had studied abroad for academic credit, an increase of 5.2% over the previous year, with US undergraduate participation in study abroad more than tripling over the prior two decades (Institute of International Education, 2007, 2015).

Travel, as a part of a global education, has both nation state and individual dimensions. For example, the USA in its desire to ensure that it remains competitive in an increasingly global marketplace while responding to global issues, conflicting resource utilisation, economic demands and national security underlies global competence and national needs (Lewin, 2009). On a personal level, global citizenship has been defined as a ‘meritorious viewpoint that suggests that global forms of belonging, responsibility, and political action counter the intolerance and ignorance that more provincial and parochial forms of citizenship encourage’ (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing, & Neil, 2012, p. 361). In bringing these interests together, the young global citizen of today might be a captain of industry tomorrow bringing positive change on a global scale (Lyons, 2015). Empirical research, for instance, has demonstrated that a self-concept that incorporates aspects of the global community is an antecedent to pro-social values, attitudes and behaviours (Reysen & Katzarska-Miller, 2013). Therefore, transnational identities developed through GET may foster individual, social and corporate responsibility as students assume positions of power.

We emphasise that using global travel as a conduit for fostering a global citizenry is a not a new idea. For example, Diprose (2012) has argued that students interested in development studies would be best to enrol in courses which are formally structured to provide an overseas educational opportunity which does not perpetuate the stereotypes of the global South such that many volunteer tourism programmes have been criticised for when promoting the benefits of a transformative experience (Butcher, 2011; Gutten-tag, 2009; McBride, Brav, Menon, & Sherraden, 2006; Simpson, 2004). In this way, these components of the course can facilitate the enactment of global citizenship, mutual exchange, reciprocity and ethical concerns for social justice (Jorgenson, 2010). A structured course has been advocated to ensure academic rigour, learning outcomes and goals are achieved (Dall’Alba & Sidhu, 2015; Stoner et al., 2014).

GET has provided academic institutions with a platform to potentially foster global citizenship and produce globally competent graduates (Stoner et al., 2014). Over 90% of Australian universities have strategic plans that support global mobility (AIM Overseas, 2011). While international service learning, is increasingly seen as a non-negotiable component of many undergraduate degrees and increasingly, students who undertake university-sponsored GET do so with the understanding that such experience is essential for one’s education and future career (Daly, 2011; Forsey, Broomhall, & Davis, 2012). For example, GET has been found to provide beneficial learning outcomes including the improvement of student grades (Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010). Further, several studies have shown that employees value a study abroad experience (Crossman & Clarke, 2010; Curran, 2007; Trooboff, Vande Berg, & Rayman, 2008) but there is very little evidence to suggest that students’ future careers have developed as a result of the experience itself (Franklin, 2010). Instead, it is possible
that top students are more attracted to GET in the first place due to their above average grades or levels of intercultural competence.

There are many other benefits of GET for the student. The notion that an overseas experience can increase one's intercultural competence has been supported by many studies (Clarke, Flaherty, Wright, & McMillen, 2009; Daly, 2011; Starr-Glass, 2016; Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, & Klute, 2012; Williams, 2005). This includes the improvement of students intercultural communication skills (Williams, 2005), intercultural sensitivity (Clarke et al., 2009), global mindedness (Clarke et al., 2009; Hadis, 2005) and open mindedness (Hadis, 2005).

However, there are several studies which do not provide empirical support for many of the pre-mentioned outcomes of GET. Some hypothesise that this is due, in part, to heterogeneity in GET experience programming and length. Recent data on outbound mobility, for instance, reflect an increasing emphasis that both Australian and US universities are placing on short-term GET programmes, especially during the summer break. In 2012, participation by Australian students in short-term outbound mobility programmes represented 56% of all outbound mobility programmes. In the US, participation in short-term (less than 8 weeks) programmes increased from 51.4% of all programmes in 2004/2005 to 62.1% in 2013/2014 (Institute of International Education, 2007, 2015). This reflects the application of neo-liberal values to young people's travel, leisure and educational practices and reinforces the notion that leisure time itself is a context for some nation building (Lyons et al., 2012).

A final outcome of GET, which will be explored in the following section, is the change in identity and personal development to the student. Many studies have found that the experience goes further than fostering a greater understanding of the global, to fostering a greater understanding of self (Bandyopadhyay & Bandyopadhyay, 2015; Dolby, 2007; Hadis, 2005). Much like the grand tour, GET is an opportunity for self-exploration. The consequences of providing structured opportunities for self-exploration through GET, however, remain largely unknown.

**Travelling for self and identity**

Sussman (2000) argues that culture is an important reference for self-definition. Casmire (1984, p. 2) defines cultural identity as ‘the image of the self and the culture intertwined in the individual’s total conception of reality’. Culture’s effect on behaviour is a well-documented phenomenon, however, its effect on the self is less widely understood (Marsella, 1985). The work that has been done linking culture and personality in the mid-twentieth century and then later by Geertz (1973), Hall (1976) and others clearly demonstrates that perception of self and identification differ across cultural boundaries. For example, Hall (1976, p. 226) argues that in cultures with strong family bonds such as Chinese, Japanese, Arab villagers and Spanish in North and South America, as a ‘child moves into the larger and more real world of the adult … he does not, even under normal circumstances, establish an identity separate from that of his community’. This is very different to children brought up in Western cultures and construe the self independently (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). ‘We draw a line around the individual and say this is our basic entity – the building block of all social relations and institutions’ (Hall, 1976, p. 231). A tourist’s engagement with the ‘other’ in travel redefines this notion. As support, Montuori and Fahim (2004) acknowledge the work of Adler (1977) on cross-cultural transitions and Hall’s (1959, 1976, 1983) work on culture as being pivotal in understanding the self. Montuori and Fahim (2004, p. 256) suggest that ‘an exchange with persons from other cultures can be used as a vehicle for changing oneself in a potentially desirable manner’. In fact, relationships formed in tourism have the potential to assist the tourist in constructing an interdependent self with the assistance of the ‘other’: ‘Others thus participate actively and continuously in the definition of the interdependent self’ (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 227).

Social identity theory posits that individuals construct identities based on their membership in social groups and interactions with important others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Ward (2004) notes that social identification leads to effective intercultural relations and in turn, affects psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. Relating this to GET, the process of social identification is when young students begin to compare themselves to their peers and others in the cross-cultural context and in this they find a space for development of self. Hibbert, Dickinson, and Curtin (2013) explored the effects of interpersonal relationships in travel on the perception of self. They found that development and maintenance of relationships affects identity and in-turn travel behaviour. This is a recent movement in the literature towards understanding that identity can play a large part in the types of travel experiences people choose, and the psychosocial outcomes that stem from those travel experiences.

Research drawing on social identity theory has demonstrated that social identification influences altruistic behaviour (De Cremer & van Vugt, 1999). If a global identity represents the broadest scale of identity formation, fostering a global identity may be an important
mechanism for enhancing cooperation in global social dilemmas including climate change and biodiversity loss (Buchan et al., 2011). Students engaged in GET are then constructing identities based on the altruistic value of ‘other’: their worldview expands and resonates with a global citizenry.

If we pursue this idea of a search for identity and self-understanding we see it is only a modern phenomenon. Baumeister (1986) explains that individuality and adolescence was absent in pre-modern times before industrialisation and the division of labour occurred. Before this life was organised collectively much like what is currently seen in East Asian and Southern European countries. ‘The family filled a vital role [and] placed children in adult roles’ (Baumeister, 1986, p. 104). Many adult decisions were made for the young person including marriage partners and occupation (Baumeister, 1986). The young adolescent was seen to transform to adulthood once these two events had occurred. However, with industrialisation in the nineteenth century, more career options opened up and adolescents were not limited to farming. The adult identity then ‘became something chosen by the adolescent rather than arranged by parental decision and influence within a context of limited options’ (Baumeister, 1986, p. 105).

By the time an individual turns 18 most of his/her physiological and neural development is complete. In many Western countries this age signifies the transition from adolescence to adulthood as it coincides with key events like the end of secondary schooling and new legal responsibilities, such as voting and consuming alcohol. However at this age many young people have yet to assume other adult responsibilities; for example, completing tertiary studies, marriage and childbirth. The uncertainty of the scheduling of these events makes for a very confusing period for young people. Additionally, the length of this period is unknown with Côté and Bynner (2008, p. 253) arguing that ‘the transition to adulthood is now taking longer on average than in the past, delayed until the mid-twenties to late-twenties for a significant proportion of youth cohorts in many developed societies’. This search for identity and self is seen as a transition to adulthood and has been termed young adulthood (Erikson, 1968, 1980), emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2002) and post-adolescence (Du Bois-Reymond, 1998).

Beck (1992) introduced the concept of ‘choice biographies’ to explain that young people faced increasing responsibilities due to the greater number of choices. And with this growing number of options young people began to postpone the assumption of adult roles to much later in life (Shulman, Feldman, Blatt, Cohen, & Mahler, 2005). Young adults have therefore become future oriented with a view that they can personally/individually alter their life courses. This notion feeds into that of Erikson’s work on identity and the life cycle. Erikson (1968, pp. 243–244) explored the youth of his day and explained that youth were discontented and craved active locomotion. This is reiterated by Minh-ha (1994, p. 21) who suggests that the craving (that Erikson writes about) is a characteristic of every traveller and plays an important part in identity formation.

Every voyage is the unfolding of a poetic. The departure, the cross-over, the fall, the wandering, the discovery, the return, the transformation. If travelling perpetuates a discontinuous state of being, it also satisfies, despite the existential difficulties it often entails, one’s insatiable need for detours and displacements in postmodern culture. The complex experience of self and other (the all-other within me and without me) is bound to forms that belong but are subject neither to ‘home’, nor to ‘abroad’.

Youth transformation, rites of passage and GET

With increasing numbers of youth now attending tertiary educational institutions GET is becoming a part of the transitional nature of youth in this period, from adolescence to adulthood. It is associated with the redefinition of self-identity, which for young people is often constituted by experiences of anxiety and the possibility for change, or ‘fateful moments’ (Giddens, 1991). Desforges (2000, p. 936) argues that many young people consider travel as a rite of passage that ‘provides answers to questions that are raised about self-identity at fateful moments’. Therefore, long-term independent travel simultaneously considered as educational and character-building, and ‘is imagined as providing for the accumulation of experience, which is used to renarrate and represent self-identity’ (Desforges, 2000, p. 942). Similarly, Elsrud (2001) describes the travel experience as a process of narrating self-identity. Drawing on Giddens’s (1991) conceptualisation of identity as a ‘self-reflexive project’, Elsrud (2001, p. 598) regards ‘the traveller as narrator and the journey as narrative’. She states that independent travel, such as long-term global backpacking, is often presented as an adventurous lifestyle, and independent travellers are accredited with increased knowledge, a stronger sense of identity and social status (Elsrud, 2001, p. 597).

The importance of travel on the young individual’s identity and development of self has been explored in the literature (Bagnoli, 2009; Riley, 1988; Shulman, Blatt, & Walsh, 2006; Wearing, 2002). In particular, Bagnoli (2009) and Frändberg (2014) explain that the travel
experience may correspond with a period of transition for the young person. A conclusion drawn in a study of students returning from youth expeditions was that these expeditions ‘could assist people to move through this transition more quickly’ (Allison, Davis-Berman, & Berman, 2012, p. 498). King (2011) believes that the gap year is a point of transition to adulthood in the life of a young person as it is a time when a young person grows and matures. It is also taken at an important time of transition in emerging adulthood; from school to tertiary education or work, and taken in the early 20s ‘before long-term commitments are made to partners, starting families or establishing careers’ (Wilson, Fisher, & Moore, 2009, p. 4). The experience of travelling at life transitions, which Arnett (2000, 2002) argues is happening at emerging adulthood, may indeed be compared with the “initiation rites” of traditional societies, which would often include a process of separation from the previous environment’ (van Gennep, 1960 cited in Bagnoli, 2009, p. 326). We make this link to help explain how the young person then undergoes a transition (in a liminal phase) and is reincorporated back into the home society with a new status (van Gennep, 1960).

We suggest that van Gennep’s (1960) conceptualisation of the rites of passage is a useful analogy to explore some of the aspects of student identity in GET and provides the structure for our discussion. According to van Gennep, the rite of passage is an individual’s changed social membership and relationships over time (Tinto, 1988) where they negotiate their place in society. A rite of passage is characterised by three phases. Phase one, separation, sees the GET student preparing to exit the home country by limiting their interaction with their social groups. They are detached from their former self via some kind of ritual, for example, a leaving party. The second phase, transition (liminality) is where the student is between two states of being. Here interaction in the new society includes forming relationships with local and study abroad students as well as local people. Adoption of new behaviours and expansion of knowledge occurs in order to ‘fit in’. The third phase is incorporation where the student becomes competent in the new society and has adopted a new status as a study abroad student. He/she is a member of a new group and upon return home, takes this status with him/her.

Therefore, GET is a period of identity formation for youth. The student will not return home with the same status. Frick’s (1983, 1987) concept of the ‘symbolic growth experience’ can be used to explain some of these findings where the experience is said to assist in learning and growth of the individual. GET can be likened to a rite of passage much like the Grand Tour of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was for young European men and women (Reau, 2012). In the seventeenth, eighteenth and part of the nineteenth centuries, youth leisure travel was performed in the Grand Tour of Europe for the purpose of education and self-development by the affluent youth. This was an unstructured travel experience of up to three years which was initially undertaken by the British. Therefore the trip began in the UK and moved over to the European continent via France, Switzerland, Germany and Italy (Towner, 1985). Young travellers were often chaperoned, they rented apartments for months at a time in cities such as Milan, Florence and Venice and tutors were sought. Through this tour, travel was intended to increase one’s worldliness and sophistication and ‘to confer the traveller with full membership into the aristocratic power structure’ (Weaver & Lawton, 2010, p. 52).

Reau (2012, p. 14) explains that for youth undertaking a Grand Tour, ‘travel offered something that could not be learned at home: it allowed the traveller to reflect on himself and his own society, guided by the thought of his eventual return home’. Consequently, the increased mobility garnered by travel is essential to developing inner selves and transitioning to adulthood (Thomson & Taylor, 2005). We see the similarities with GET being the alignment of education and self-development. GET is not just a ‘holiday’ but an active experiential learning experience that engages in and with, a separation from ‘home’ and the opportunity to explore ones idea of self and identity in a new environment.

We acknowledge the limitations that this conceptualisation of a comparison between the Grand Tour and GET bring; where the focus of both concepts is young people travelling from the global north to the south (Mowforth & Munt, 2015). However, we see that they have significant overlaps and these overlaps offer insights into identity formation and social membership of the youth of their time. A key overlap is the lack of diversity in participation; the Grand Tour was predominantly undertaken by young white aristocrats and GET has been found to attract students from white backgrounds (Institute of International Education, 2015) and perpetuate social and class stereotypes (Gerhards & Hans, 2013; M’Balia, 2013). Adler (1985) has argued though that even in the British working class, their ‘tramping’ for work which occurred at a similar period in time to the Grand Tour, resembled a rite of passage to adulthood. Additionally, Towner’s (1985) analysis showed that the class of the tourist changed in the Grand Tour’s 300-year history to include a larger number of middle-class participants.
Recent studies have shown that the benefits of GET described in this paper transcend race, ethnicity, gender, class and ability (Ablaeva, 2012; Smith, Smith, Robbins, Eash, & Walker, 2013; Wick, 2011) and that financial and academic barriers can be overcome (Kasravi, 2009; Murray Brux & Fry, 2010). Consequently, the rite of passage can be experienced by all engaged in GET. This is important to consider in the changing climate of GET. For example, the demand for such programmes from students in regions such as East Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa is growing in comparison to North America and Western Europe. Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley (2009) discussed this as a south–north phenomenon. Additionally, while the Grand Tour was predominately undertaken by young men, GET programmes (and those affiliated such as volunteer tourism) have a much higher female to male ratio (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2010). Within these trends we will continue to see study abroad students engage with the ‘other’ in their personal quest for transformation resulting in greater global citizenry.

Starr-Glass (2016) argues that as an undergraduate student one is stuck between two socially constructed rites of passage; graduation from school and from college/university. At both stages a student is required to transition and adopt a new identity. We posit that when GET is added to a student’s study plan there is an extra ‘rite of passage’ that he/she will encounter which can prove to be disruptive to identity formation yet also results in a transition to a more globally oriented, outward focussed identity. This rite of passage then can be more powerful than the other two in producing a global citizen.

Conclusion

This paper has explored some of the outcomes of the study abroad experience on global citizenry and development of self. We suggest that to liken GET to a rite of passage in terms of its impact on identity and transformation provides some insights into how it can be analysed. Each student will engage differently with their study abroad experience – some will take a more active role in student or wider community life. These experiences will affect their engagement with community and citizenry on return home. Regardless of these differences, we argue that the experience is an important component in the transition to adulthood as has also been described by Thomson and Taylor (2005) in their reference to cosmopolitanism and mobility. We posit that the sequence of life events in emerging adulthood that has been theorised by Arnett (2000) and others is missing a vital stage: a study abroad experience. What the students gain is some insight into understanding of their self as it engages in the components of the cross-cultural interactions of GET albeit with the limitations that also come with these experiences (cf. Mowforth & Munt, 2015).

We suggest that a ‘rite of passage’ has the potential to enhance and foster a transformative experience that leads to a shift in perspective, awareness and worldview, and that the short-term educational travel programmes offer and provide a learning site for students to experience, grapple with, reframe and reflect on issues global in nature (Wearing, Tarrant, Schweinsberg, Lyons, & Stoner, 2015). But to achieve this, GET programmes need to be grounded by a sound pedagogical framework which (a) ensures academic rigour, (b) establishes and measures resultant learning outcomes and (c) ascertains whether proposed goals are achieved (Landon et al., 2017; Stoner et al., 2014). It is this more structured form of travel that we see as central to a move to a more global citizenship for youth today with the potential to form part of a young person’s rite of passage. This is opposed to the unstructured travel of the past (such as the Grand Tour) as we suggest in this age of neo-liberal dominance, travel has been captured by the market and is so heavily influenced towards consumption and self-gratification that some of the elements of a rite of passage have been subsumed.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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