Coming of Age in Foreign Lands: Overcoming the Double Hurdle to Adulthood Using the Developmental Benefits of Cross-Cultural Immersions

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Abstract

Transitioning to adulthood in the new millennium involves dealing with a myriad of complexities. Some young adults must deal with those hurdles in addition to challenges specific to their mental health. This creates a complicated situation conceptualized here as the 'double hurdle' to adulthood. This position paper explores the use of supported cross-cultural immersions as a rite of passage that can help young adults overcome this dual adversity and emerge into adulthood. Studies show how cross-cultural immersions can lead to the development of more complex mindsets, increased creativity in problem-solving, as well as integrative complexity. Such findings inform and introduce Supportive Immersion (SUIM), the suggested methodology to guide young adults stuck in the double hurdle to leave behind unhealthy life patterns and adequately prepare for adult life.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, young adulthood, cross-cultural immersion, mental health, rite of passage

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COMING OF AGE IN FOREIGN LANDS

Recent changes in the structure of industrialized societies are making youth transition to adulthood different from what it was only a few decades ago (Arnett, 1998). Arnett (2000) has analyzed these changes and concluded that people ages 18 through their mid to late twenties are experiencing a completely new life stage he termed, "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 1998). He explains some of the characteristics of this stage in the following way (Arnett, Zukauskiene, & Sugimura, 2014):

1. *Identity explorations*: trying out various possibilities.
2. *Instability*: changes are frequent.
3. *Self-focus*: fewer daily social roles and obligations to others than in any other life stage.
4. *Feeling in-between*: in transition, neither adolescent nor adult.
5. *Possibilities and optimism*: nearly all emerging adults believe their future is bright.

It is important to note that emerging adulthood, as a developmental stage, seems to be a phenomenon that is exclusive to industrial societies (Arnett, 2007), where people have higher levels of education and access to more lucrative information-based professions (Arnett, 2000). To these emerging adults, reaching full adulthood mainly entails fulfilling the following three criteria: financial independence, accepting responsibility for oneself, and independent decision-making (Arnett, 1998).

This period of emerging adulthood can provide wonderful opportunities for exploration of the world and the self, which serves as meaningful preparation for full adulthood. At the same time, leaving youth behind and making the transition to adulthood is becoming increasingly challenging and leading to higher incidences of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and other unhealthy coping mechanisms (Henin & Berman, 2016). According to the Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2014), young adults today are finding it harder to join the labor force, and fewer of them are working or studying in comparison to 25 years ago. Those that are studying are dealing, on average, with almost double the student debt. Furthermore, one out of four young adult males suffer from substance abuse disorders and one out of ten young adults struggle with major depressive disorder. Contrary to common belief, it is young adults and not adolescents that are more prone to certain risky behavior such as unprotected sex, substance abuse, and reckless driving (Arnett, 2000).

The Double Hurdle to Adulthood

Making the turn from adolescence to adulthood has historically been one of the most challenging life transitions. No other transition requires such a drastic change in mindset, responsibility, and social roles. But as mentioned, growing up in the new millennium adds several complexities. Economic pressures as well as the rapid changes toward a globalized technologically-oriented culture also impact the institutions responsible for youth development. Parents (Lythcott-Haims, 2015) and schools (Azzam, 2009) are struggling to keep up with the

shifts of the new millennium and struggling to equip youth with the necessary competencies for successful entrance to the adult world. The situation then is one of higher demands in an exponentially more complex society with generally more inadequate preparation provided.

This gap between what youth are prepared for and what is demanded of them represents an arduous hurdle all youth must overcome to make the leap to adulthood. However, in this position paper, it is proposed that some young adults must confront a double hurdle. In addition to making the necessary transformations to become independent and responsible adults, they are battling additional challenges such as mental health issues, substance abuse, engagement in risky behaviors, and learning differences. Breaking through this double hurdle can be extremely difficult, as each hurdle makes the other more burdensome. For example, someone struggling with anxiety may avoid searching for a job and the reality of a highly competitive job market may exacerbate anxiety.

Being faced with the double hurdle of coming into adulthood can be a daunting task. As a result, some emerging adults avoid this socially and chronologically expected benchmark of development, thus becoming apathetic and careless of the consequences of their behavior (Currie, 2005).

In order to transcend this seemingly unfathomable conundrum, many emerging adults and their parents seek external support through young adult treatment programs. These programs focus on guiding struggling individuals to find resolution with this double hurdle. They can then work through their psychological issues as well as prepare for adult life.

Venturing to Foreign Lands as a Rite of Passage

Throughout time, cultures have created rituals to help people process significant life changes and prepare them for the perspectives and behaviors needed in a new stage or situation. Campbell (1972) speaks of these rituals in the following way:

> The so called rites of passage, which occupy such a prominent place in the life of a primitive society are distinguished by formal, and usually very severe, exercises of severance, whereby the mind is radically cut away from the attitudes, attachments, and life patterns of the stage being left behind. (p. 10)

Van Gennep (2011) studied rites of passage and proposed three general stages that are common across rituals and cultures: separation, liminality, and reintegration. Campbell (1972) supported these findings through compiling numerous myths, stories, and fables from cultures across history with a storyline similar to the process or stages of these rites of passage. He noted that the hero or protagonist follows a similar path in the transformation “venturing to a region of supernatural wonder” (leaving home or separation), “encountering fabulous forces” (transformation process or liminality), and “coming back from this mysterious adventure with new powers ” (p. 30) (consummation of

change or *reintegration*). Campbell (1972) explains that this standard path of mythological adventure is "a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage" (p. 30). These stories serve as a type of psychological preparation and encouragement to leave behind the comforts of childhood, venture to foreign lands, and return an adult.

The use of rites of passage experiences to mark the coming of age is found in many cultures (Lindholm, 2007). This transition, in which youth are prepared for adulthood, involves large changes in the person's mindset and behaviors. Nevertheless, the transition from childhood to adulthood in industrialized societies is hardly marked at all, with common rites of passage such as getting a driver's license or graduating from high school (Lindholm, 2007). This vague transition leaves young people devoid of guided opportunities to acquire the behavioral patterns and life skills necessary for successful adulthood.

Some young adults in industrialized societies choose to venture to foreign lands during their emerging adulthood in the form of a study abroad or gap year abroad. Study abroad entails enrolling in another country's educational institution (e.g. high school, university), whereas a gap year is more experiential and open-ended, involving work and volunteering overseas (Haigler & Nelson, 2013).

Whether intentionally or not, these young people are embarking in a coming of age rite of passage that parallels the rites of passage discussed by Van Gennep (2011). They are leaving home and typically venturing to a place that is different from their familiar environment; this is the separation stage or "venturing to a region of supernatural wonder" (Campbell, 1972, p. 30). Exposure to other cultures during this period challenges emerging adults' established worldviews and embedded behavioral patterns. At the same time, these emerging adults are introduced to some life patterns of adulthood. Being away from parents and the comforts of their own culture prompts emerging adults to learn creative ways of taking care of themselves, managing their finances (even if they are still sponsored by parents), and making their own decisions. These experiences represent the liminal stage, and contribute to the process of transformation toward adulthood through "encountering fabulous (cross-cultural and independent living) forces" (Campbell, 1972, p. 30). Afterwards, they go through the reintegration stage, "coming back from this mysterious adventure with new powers" (Campbell, 1972, p. 30) and putting into action at home the new behaviors developed during their time away.

The Development of New Perspectives and Behaviors

Much of an individual's learning process is based on creating cognitive frames, or schemas. Schemas increase predictability, stability, and control (Crisp, 2015) as they allow the brain to "make rapid assessments and carry out efficient information processing to then initiate behaviors that enable the organism to survive" (Siegel, 2007, p. 135). At the social level, this kind of predetermined response is provided by culture which communicates shared schemas from one generation to the next (Matsumoto, 1997).

Similarly, a person's worldview "provides a person with presuppositions of what the world is really like and what constitutes valid and important knowledge about the world" (Cobern, 1994, p.5). While an individual's worldview constitutes a very useful survival tool, it also has inherent limitations. As a worldview creates beliefs in certain truths, it makes other beliefs not true. It reveals certain perceptions while it conceals others and it motivates some behaviors while it forgoes alternative ones. A worldview offers a horizon of possibilities, but it also creates blindspots.

In order to maintain adaptability to life's ever changing challenges and avoid dangerous blindspots, one must find ways to dislodge or expand outdated and unhealthy internalized worldviews. Such mental frameworks are dislodged and updated when incoming stimuli is salient enough or dissonant enough that they are unable to fit into previous schemas. This challenges the brain to either reshape the schema or create a new one entirely. Piaget (1954) termed this type of learning, accommodation, in contrast with the process of assimilation, where schemas remain the same and new information adds to it or confirms it.

Emerging adults must take accommodative leaps to dislodge their schemas, as their existing schemas may not serve them adequately in adult life. Additionally, those struggling with psychological and emotional issues must also replace the unhealthy tendencies that are contributing to these issues and doubling the hurdle to adulthood.

Dissonant experiences allow childhood schemas to be replaced and accommodative learning to take place. This accommodative learning allows an emerging adult to sever youthful life patterns. These experiences can lead to temporary confusion and stress; however, they are also a main component of important human development across the lifespan. Dabrowski (2015) used the term positive disintegrations to describe these experiences, and noted that "the course of development passes through the loosening of rigid structures" (1976, p. 135). He added that true disintegration involves everything from depression, anxiety, and agony, to enthusiasm and even ecstasy. This results in the transcendence of the individual into another level of existence (Dabrowski, 1976).

Accommodative Leaps in Foreign Lands

Ventures to foreign lands and their ensuing cross-cultural encounters have traditionally been portrayed as distressing, and at times even traumatizing, experiences. The tendency to pathologize these experiences, according to Berry (2005), "may be partly due to the history of its study in psychiatry and in clinical psychology" (p. 710). Concepts like culture shock and adjustment (Oberg, 1960; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) constitute the bulk of cross-cultural studies. Few studies advocate for the positive contribution of cross-cultural encounters in the development of an individual's more complex mindset, clearer sense of self, perspective taking, self-confidence, or other wellness and growth related concepts.

The evidence is slowly building to demonstrate that cross-cultural immersions don't destroy or diminish people, but instead provide opportunities and help them achieve their goals beyond their initial imaginings (Berry, 2005). There is now abundant subjective evidence from participants' testimonials of their study abroad or gap year experience demonstrating how powerful these journeys can be.

In addition, studies focusing on the benefits of cross-cultural immersions show interesting findings. Fee, Gray, and Lu (2013) found that people living abroad significantly increased their levels of cognitive complexity, especially those who interacted most frequently with host culture nationals. They argue that by interacting with locals, "they experience more frequent 'accommodative (learning) leaps' that stimulate schema creation, resulting in a more complex mindset" (Fee et al., 2013, p. 13).

Several studies support the conclusions reached by Fee et al. (2013), adding to the notion that cross-cultural immersions contribute to developing a complex mindset, increasing levels of integrative complexity or cognitive complexity, (Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006; Crisp, 2015; Tadmor, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2012; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006; Tadmor, Tetlock, & Peng, 2009) and creativity or divergent thinking (Crisp, 2015; Lee, Therriault, & Linderholm, 2012; Maddux Bivolaru, Hafenbrack, Tadmor, & Galinsky, 2013; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). Integrative complexity refers to the capacity and willingness to acknowledge the legitimacy of competing perspectives on an issue and to forge conceptual links amongst those perspectives (Crisp, 2015). Divergent thinking looks beyond obvious answers to problems (Crisp, 2015). This suggests that through cross-cultural immersions people can broaden their repertoire of responses to life situations by drawing from different perspectives and creating new and more adaptable schemas.

Hirschorn and Hefferon (2013) found that participants in a cross-cultural gap year underwent impactful personal growth. They explain how the experience presented challenges to their personal narrative and shattered their assumptive world. Through overcoming such adversity the individuals discovered personal authenticity, connected with a sense of true self, recognized the socially constructed aspects of themselves, and found a new faith in intrinsic will that encouraged them to implement meaningful behavior change (Hirschorn & Hefferon, 2013). It appears that what Hirschorn and Hefferon (2013) observed was the process of positive disintegration, as study participants loosened their cognitive structures, and underwent accommodative leaps to develop a more authentic self and make important life changes.

Data from the Institute for the International Education of Students (Dwyer & Peters, 2004) provides evidence of the personal development that can take place through cross-cultural immersions. After surveying more than 3400 alumni, results showed that 97% said studying abroad served as a catalyst for increased maturity, 96% reported increased self-confidence, 89% said it enabled them to tolerate ambiguity, and 95% stated it had a lasting impact on their worldview

(Dwyer & Peters, 2004).

In summary, with cross-cultural immersions, young adults struggling with the double hurdle may have an opportunity to modify and evolve their cognitive structures, enabling them to:

- Face the added complexities of 21st century globalized societies by developing more complex mindsets.
- Become unstuck by loosening rigid structures through the challenge of dissonant stimuli.
- Experience a surge in personal development and resourcefulness, using creativity and the integration of perspectives to implement new responses to life.
- Complete a true coming of age rite of passage which propels them to successfully transition to adulthood.

Implications for Practice with Struggling Emerging Adults

Although cross-cultural immersions have been used by young adults as educational and personal growth rites of passage for years, they have rarely been used with intentional therapeutic purposes. Based on the evidence found in non-therapeutic populations (Benet-Martinez et al., 2006; Fee et al., 2013; Haigler & Nelson, 2013; Lee et al., 2012; Maddux et al., 2013; Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006; Tadmor et al., 2009; Tadmor et al., 2012; Tenser, 2016) it is proposed here that if an intentional intervention is devised employing a structured approach, then participating in cross-cultural experiences may be highly therapeutic for individuals confronted with the double hurdle.

Though cross-cultural experiences may be ideal for emerging adults, these same experiences could be advised against for those with existing psychopathologies. A concern is that cross-cultural experiences may push people out of their comfort zone and create culture shock, which could exacerbate an already existing psychological struggle. Given this, how can a struggling emerging adult safely engage in a coming of age experience in a foreign land in a way that launches him or her toward adult life and away from impairing psychological difficulties? How can emerging adults reap the benefits of cross-cultural immersions while avoiding further despair? Crisp (2015) highlights three essential key conditions for intercultural experiences that activate integrative complexity and divergent thinking: distance, dual engagement, and immersion. These key elements are explained below, adding considerations and suggestions for potential therapeutic benefit for populations with the double hurdle.

Distance. Intercultural contact has to be difficult if it is likely to stimulate advanced cognitive processes; in other words, home and host cultures must be markedly different from each other in order to evoke change. This point is supported by Tadmor and Tetlock (2006) who proposed an inverted U-shape

relationship between the two cultures (home and host) and the amount of cognitive change that can be expected. When cultures are too different from each other, such as between Swedish social democrats and Afghan Islamists, the interaction might be too overwhelming, making integration very difficult (Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Alternatively, an American traveling to Canada might find the experience underwhelming and fail to evoke cognitive dissonance.

When working with therapeutic populations, interactions with foreign cultures and subcultures are suggested to be as deliberate as possible, looking at the specific characteristics of the individual and peer group, and matching them with the right host populations. Host cultures and subcultures with strong positive values, open to interacting with foreigners yet proud of their culture, and with very diverse lifestyles are ideal to turn cross-cultural interactions into therapeutic opportunities. Furthermore, facilitators of these intercultural encounters are recommended to be attentive to integrative opportunities, create bridges of understanding between cultures, and aid young adults in stepping out of their current schemas into the world of the other. This may allow new constellations of being to be brought into their personal repertoire.

Dual engagement. Crisp (2015) explains that to achieve higher levels of integrative complexity and divergent thinking the individual must engage with both cultural perspectives (host and home). The individual must then seek to integrate home and host instead of maintaining the home culture or completely assimilating into the hosts' culture. Acculturation strategies theory (Berry, 2005) suggests that when exposed to a new culture people may choose to fully keep their home culture identity (separation) or change their identity to the host culture (assimilation). These strategies will not support adaptation or yield the same cognitive benefits as integration, which entails a creative process of synthetizing both cultures into one's identity.

The process of identity development is inherent to young adulthood, and constitutes a common challenge for struggling young adults. Hence, while dual engagement may be difficult, it may also prove very fruitful from a therapeutic standpoint. Research shows that because young people are uncertain of their place in society and lack the skills necessary to exercise integration strategies, they often endorse assimilation and separation acculturation attitudes (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Therefore, guidance toward integration is essential as it provides an opportunity to take in different cultural perspectives and help with identity formation and social adjustment.

This synthesizing process encourages the development of cognitive flexibility (Crisp, 2015). This is particularly salient for populations with mental health issues, as inflexibility is a representative characteristic of psychopathology according to various theories and modalities of psychotherapy (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010; Malone et al., 1982; May, 1983; Maslow, 1999; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1969).

Immersion. Crisp (2015) suggests that the more time spent interacting with another culture, the better. A minimum length of time is not specified, but it is indicated that better results come from a year living abroad rather than from a quick trip. Other studies suggest that more interaction with the locals increases the chance of cognitive changes taking place (Fee et al., 2013; Tadmor et al., 2012).

Supportive Immersion

Distance, dual engagement, and immersion alone are unlikely to yield therapeutic growth in young adults struggling with the double hurdle. In fact, they may be recommended against these experiences, or opt out of participating, in fear that it will exacerbate their condition. Thus, a specific clinical methodology is proposed: the Supportive Immersion (SUIM) method. The methodology is proposed and explained below. Quotes from young adult participants in a SUIM program are embedded, to offer insight into the young adults' perspectives on the clinical methodology.

Table 1

Summary of Supportive Immersion

Struggling Young Adult Situation	Intervention	Hypothesized Outcome
Double Hurdle 1. Need to adopt life patterns of adulthood. 2. Need to overcome hindering psychological difficulties.	**Cross Cultural Experience** 1. Invoke Accommodative leaps 2. Challenge Assumptive World + **Supportive Immersion** 1. Empathic Connecting 2. Collaborative Empowerment 3. Experiential Scaffolding	1. Integrative Complexity 2. Creativity + **Integrative Growth** 3. Transferable, Incorporative, and Systemic Problem-Solving 4. Self-Generated Learning 5. Increased Agency

SUIM is a person-centered approach to experiential learning. In SUIM, the use and development of empathetic connecting skills, collaborative empowerment, and process-based scaffolding activities invite non-threatening exposure to integrative growth opportunities. This process intends to lead to increased agency, as well as shifts in participants' ways of being in the world. Table 1 provides a summary of the double hurdle many young adults experience, the proposed intervention using SUIM in cross-cultural contexts, and the hypothesized outcomes.

Integrative growth, the main goal of SUIM, questions mechanistic and fragmented models of development and learning, characteristic of industrial paradigms. In these models, the person learns skills which serve very specific functions, but these skills may not lead to a true understanding of the information acquired. Furthermore, such information might not be extrapolated to other situations or problems, especially if its context is not understood. This may

be because the person has not fully integrated the information or the intended learning and growth are not stable or sustainable. Examples of these kinds of models are traditional test-oriented education in schools and techniques for behavior modification. Integrative growth, on the other hand, aspires for the learning experience to be:

- Transferable: the structures or schemas developed are adaptable; this allows creative problem-solving.
- Incorporative: what is learned is not just something the person does, but instead becomes part of who the person is. Incorporation permits the learner to adjust the learning to his or her own worldview, making it more likely that the new schemas will be sustained over time.
- Systemic: the growth experienced is not isolated, it includes various contexts and perspectives. Thus, the learner grows through openly integrating his or her surroundings, and when the learner grows, those around grow as well.

When SUIM is effective, and integrative growth is elicited, it is expected that the person will be better able to self-regulate and self-generate, likely because they can more easily adjust and problem-solve when challenges arise. Self-generation suggests that the energy for problem-solving and learning intentionally initiates within the individual. This allows a person to ignite and steer his or her own actions, which reduces dependence on external stimuli to energize task initiation, prompt responses, or direct healthy and efficient action.

There are three main pillars of SUIM in which integrative growth is believed to be evoked. While SUIM and its pillars are useful for experiences beyond cross-cultural immersion, and for populations other than young adults stuck in the double hurdle, the pillars will be explained focusing on that context and population.

Empathic connecting. When interacting with someone from a different cultural background, practicing empathy fosters the avoidance of biases and stereotyping, as well as promotes new perspectives. This may be difficult as it entails relinquishing one's schemas and worldview and not only understanding the other, but understanding how they themselves understand their own world. Empathy is hard to teach, as Khan (1991) says, "empathy is not a technique but an attitude" (p. 168). Such an attitude entails open-mindedness, non-judgmental appraisals, true caring for the world of the other, and selflessness.

Empathy is both useful for facilitators as well as participants of SUIM. Facilitators use it to delve into the world of the participants and take on the individual's worldview. They can then base the learning experience on a combination of knowledge and expertise parallel to that of the participants. The participant uses empathy to open up to new perspectives other than his own, which provide alternatives to new horizons of being.

Facilitating intercultural encounters with an empathic attitude is highly beneficial. Such an attitude is likely to dissolve rigid schemas, thus making the exchange of worldviews possible. During a trip to South Africa using SUIM, a participant reminisced on the impact of cross-cultural immersion by saying, "It helped me realize that my way is not always *the way*". Being able to realize that one's truth is not necessarily *the* truth, constitutes an essential step toward personal development, as it signifies willingness to revise and potentially change already established schemas. Another SUIM participant reached an important insight after working side by side with the locals of a rural community in Costa Rica. He noted, "They just work very hard, and they succeed; I can see now that if I work hard, I can succeed". For this young man, the schema of success was attached to getting a university degree, which was paralyzing due to his learning difficulties; but by delving into the worldview of his cross-cultural counterparts, he was able to redefine his concept of success.

Collaborative Empowerment. Collaboration sits very deeply in humans' cultural heritage (Bowles & Gintis, 2011; Crisp, 2015; Harari, 2015; Stix, 2016). It allows for exponential growth and creates a sense of belonging and safety (Buss, 2000; Crisp, 2015; Stix, 2016). With collaborative empowerment, the lines between teacher and student, helper and helped, skilled and unskilled, become blurry. Everyone is involved in a process of giving and receiving and all knowledge is valuable. This mutualistic exchange can be especially rich when people from different cultures connect and realize they can build bonds, alliances, and empower each other.

Collaborating on projects with locals from other cultures, sharing meals, playing games together, and truly delving into a culture's lifestyle by creating meaningful relationships provides the basis for integrative growth. The following testimonial speaks of the rewarding experience of a SUIM participant while immersed in a rural indigenous community: "I felt seen and known by the whole town, and going into each other's houses… the sense of community there is amazing".

SUIM emphasizes creating alliances and friendship between people of different cultures in a way that such collaboration leads to mutualistic benefit. It is well known that community service and volunteering provide psychological benefits (Post, 2005). However, SUIM goes a step further by challenging the notion of service (Clammer, 2012; Watkins & Shulman, 2010) and arguing that emerging adults stuck in the double hurdle feel more satisfied when they empower others, rather than serve them. With this, they empower themselves, thus strengthening their sense of identity and leaving behind potential feelings of helplessness. Regarding empowerment, an indigenous young man who collaborated in a project with SUIM participants said, "It is fun to work with them, as a group, together, to show us that we can do many things in our community".

Process-Based Scaffolding. The brain is highly dependent on environment and experience to develop and change (Costandi, 2016). In order to encourage

emerging adults' positive changes and development, it is believed to be beneficial to provide them with opportunities for enriching and diverse experiences. As Rollo May argued, "There is no such thing as truth or reality for a living human being except as he participates in it" (as cited in Khan, 1991, p. 17). Therapeutic cross-cultural encounters require experiential participation. Participants are involved in the lives of the locals, instead of just observing them from a distance. Another SUIM participant expressed how impactful the process-based experiential component was by saying, "We lived with them, ate their food, worked with them; it's not like we were tourists being led around and shown stuff". People's level of comfort in such experiences may vary from person to person. Facilitators are suggested to accompany the process and carefully design experiences so that participants remain in a zone of optimal engagement and learning. Furthermore, it is recommended that facilitators also provide scaffolding to help participants to continuously reach outside their comfort zone and attain higher levels of growth.

The process toward building new ways of being cannot happen only by imparting information on the host culture or letting the participant go through cross-cultural experiences without processing them. If participants' schemas cannot comprehend and integrate the incoming information, the new information will likely be assimilated into old schemas or soon discarded. When this occurs, emerging adults dealing with the double hurdle tend to have negative cross-cultural experiences and reinforce their unhealthy coping mechanisms. For integrative growth to take place, participants may benefit from "borrowing" others' schemas to serve as temporary containers so they can begin processing new experiences while appropriate schemas develop. This scaffolding process is provided by attuned facilitators, but can also at times be provided by caring hosts in the foreign culture. Thus, the host culture provides not only dissonant experiences, but also offers ways of understanding it.

Conclusion

Emerging adults seeking transition to adulthood in this age of complexity need to become more complex themselves. Leaving home and embarking on a journey to foreign lands can serve as a great coming of age experience. Through this process, young adults are challenged by the dissonant stimuli provided by the cross-cultural encounters, and thus develop skills like creative problem-solving and integrative complexity. Emerging adults stuck in the 'double hurdle' to adulthood require the use of intentional methodology to turn such journeys into therapeutic experiences.

Supportive Immersion has been proposed as a methodology that could help young adults stuck in the double hurdle. SUIM is intended to lead participants step by step in a scaffolded process. In this way, emerging adults learn to understand themselves and the world around them in a myriad of ways. They learn to make connections between viewpoints and develop new perspectives. This empowers them to develop a more complex mindset, and with it the ability to self-regulate, as well as generate their own solutions to life problems. Along

with the updating of schemas and life patterns, these intended outcomes may become the foundation needed to face the challenges of adulthood. With this, young adults complete their coming of age rite of passage, and come back home "from this mysterious adventure with new powers" (Campbell, 1972, p. 30).

Methodologies seeking to help young adults overcome the double hurdle to adulthood may not be sufficient if only teaching specific skills to deal with specific problems. Not a thousand of those "tools" in their "toolbox" will do. The world they are preparing to face is too complex and filled with too much uncertainty. To succeed, young adults must become "toolmakers" themselves. They need experiences that put them in the driver seat and help them learn how to deal with complexity, diversity, and adversity. These experiences should also help them to begin problem-solving creatively and generating novel ways of being, for themselves and those around them. SUIM utilized in a cross-cultural context aims at precisely that.

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