Counseling students' emotions during cultural immersion: Impact on reactance

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Abstract:

Counselor trainees' multicultural development is a process that engenders strong emotions. The authors inventoried students' emotions in cultural immersion activities and assessed their impact on course reactance. Findings indicated that reactance was shaped by both negative and positive emotions and that cultural immersion can be universally challenging for students.

Keywords: emotions | reactance | multicultural counseling competence | cultural immersion | counselor education

Article:

Instructors of multicultural counseling courses consistently report challenges in the classroom, including students' resistance to developing self-awareness around their values and biases (Buckley & Foldy, 2010; Burton & Furr, 2014; Watt et al., 2009). The journey toward critical consciousness (Freire, 1970/1986) can involve challenging self-examination that provokes a wide range of difficult emotions, including guilt, anger, shock, denial, anxiety, and apathy (Buckley & Foldy, 2010; Parker, Freytes, Kaufman, Woodruff, & Hord, 2004; Tummala-Nara, 2009; Watt et al., 2009). The presence of these emotions—and related defense mechanisms (Watt et al., 2009)—can limit students' engagement with the course, sometimes even resulting in overtly resistant behaviors to the content or instructor (Buckley & Foldy, 2010; Burton & Furr, 2014). Alternatively, such emotional experiences can deepen students' engagement (Coleman, 2006). Coleman (2006) indicated students' emotional experiences, both negative (e.g., anxiety, frustration) and positive (e.g., pride, joy), precipitated reflection on self-identified critical incidents in their multicultural training. It is crucial that counselor educators are better equipped to understand the role of emotions in multicultural counseling competence (MCC) development, facilitate students' effective emotional processing (Parker et al., 2004), and ultimately reduce resistance to learning (Buckley & Foldy, 2010; Pieterse, Lee, & Fetzer, 2015).

Research on multicultural education has mostly captured emotions students have toward the overall course and is often focused on White students' growth in awareness of race and racism. In one study, White counseling trainees exhibited increased posttest scores in guilt and remorse and unchanged levels of fear and empathy toward people of color following a course on Whiteness (Paone, Malott, & Barr, 2015). Paone et al. (2015) speculated that increases in unpleasant emotions, such as guilt and remorse, might actually block trainees from growing in empathy. Spanierman, Poteat, Wang, and Oh (2008), however, documented connections between White counseling students' emotional response to racism and their MCC, with guilt increasing consideration of culture in case conceptualization and empathy enhancing scores of supervisor-observed MCC. Furthermore, greater multicultural counseling knowledge was mediated by fear, such that more training was associated with lower fear, which in turn enhanced multicultural counseling knowledge. Thus, White counseling students' affective responses to racism predicted elements of their MCC. The case of guilt, in particular, demonstrated how unpleasant emotions can spur development if they are well managed and at an "optimal level" (Spanierman et al., 2008, p. 86).

Pieterse et al. (2015) also described the distinct emotions both White and minoritized students experienced during a multicultural counseling course. White students routinely reported feeling guilt or shame toward privilege, attacked or targeted by peers, and generally overwhelmed throughout the course. Although students of color also felt overwhelmed, they indicated feelings of anger or frustration toward racism playing out in the classroom and sadness for personal experiences of racism. In a grounded theory study focused on students of color, Seward (2014) found evidence that these students felt isolated, misunderstood, and responsible for representing their cultural group within a multicultural counseling class. Their emotions were connected to broader dissatisfaction with the course and perceptions that they were not fellow learners being challenged to advance their own MCC. In both studies, the different positions that White students and racial/ethnic minority students occupied within multicultural learning produced challenging emotions, with implications for their development.

Emotions and difficult realizations are particularly ubiquitous in cultural immersion projects (e.g., Hipolito-Delgado, Cook, Avrus, & Bonham, 2011; Ishii, Gilbride, & Stensrud, 2009), one of the most popular multicultural instructional strategies (Barrio Minton, Wachter Morris, & Yaites, 2014; Priester et al., 2008). Cultural immersion activities place students in a tailored learning situation, within a real-world context, thus providing meaningful contact that challenges cultural encapsulation (Atkins, Fitzpatrick, Poolokasingham, Lebeau, & Spanierman, 2017; Barden & Cashwell, 2013). These projects vary widely in terms of length and depth of the immersion experience as well as where they occur (i.e., local community or internationally; Barden & Cashwell, 2013). According to scholars (Atkins et al., 2017; Barden & Cashwell, 2013; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2011; Shannonhouse, Barden, & Mobley, 2015), key elements of immersion experiences for enhancing MCC include extended firsthand contact, opportunities to form meaningful relationships, critical reflection, consideration of sociopolitical factors, and attention to both commonalities and differences between self and those belonging to the cultural group.

The benefits of cultural immersion are empirically linked with its experiential, affectively engaging quality, such that students have opportunities to build self-awareness, other-awareness,

empathy, and self-efficacy (Atkins et al., 2017; Barden & Cashwell, 2013; Barden, Mobley, & Shannonhouse, 2014; Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2011; Ishii et al., 2009; Suthakaran, 2011). Furthermore, cultural immersion has been connected to increased multicultural relationship scores (i.e., the quality of interaction between counselors and culturally different clients) for trainees (Dickson & Jepsen, 2007). Although the difficult emotions and realizations perhaps explain the transformative power of cultural immersion projects for students, they also present a formidable challenge that could stall or even foreclose students' continued growth in MCC.

Accordingly, in this study, we asked students to report their emotions during their cultural immersion activities and tested the impact of these emotions on students' willingness to engage with the course overall. We sought to measure a wider range of possible affective responses than has been typically assessed in previous research, using an established measure of positive (e.g., proud, inspired, alert) and negative (e.g., afraid, ashamed, hostile) emotions. To measure engagement, we used the relatively new construct of *multicultural training reactance* (MTR; Lowery, Borders, & Ackerman, in press; Mio & Awakuni, 2000), based in psychological reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Reactance theory offers a theoretical understanding of resistance to multicultural training, and an avenue toward understanding how to lower resistant responses. In brief, people believe that they have the freedom to act in accordance with their beliefs and convictions. When they perceive that this freedom—closely tied to their sense of self—is threatened, they are motivated to preserve that freedom, and reactance is often manifested as anxiety, anger, aggression, or even hostility (Zhang & Sapp, 2013). In essence, reactance involves doubling down on strongly held views, the likes of which are routinely addressed by multicultural education. Lowery et al. (in press) found that counselor trainees higher in reactance gave lower effectiveness ratings for the multicultural course as well as the instructor. Given these decisions about the variables of interest, we addressed the following research questions:

> *Research Question 1*: Which positive and negative emotions reported by students in response to a cultural immersion experience are related to their MTR?

> *Research Question 2*: What is the relative influence of significant positive and negative emotions in predicting students' MTR?

Method

Participants and Procedure

Following institutional review board approval, the first author recruited participants within counselor education programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs at four universities in the southeastern United States. Three of the universities were public, and one was a private nonprofit university, with student enrollment ranging from roughly 8,000 to 29,000. Inclusion criteria were (a) enrollment in a multicultural counseling course and (b) completion of a cultural immersion activity as a formal part of this course. The structure and format for the immersion experiences differed by university. The first university had students complete a cultural interview; the second required visiting or volunteering in a space with culturally different people; the third assigned observation followed

by information gathering; and at the fourth, students completed a three-step activity of observation, information gathering, and participation/action.

In each variation of the assignment, students chose the population for their immersion experience, ideally to gain exposure and greater understanding of a group they were either unfamiliar with or harbored biases toward. Across universities, instructors supplemented the immersion activity with auxiliary opportunities for reflection, including journaling at different stages of the immersion, completing small-group discussions, facilitating whole classroom preparation for the immersion, and debriefing students' experiences. Each instructor noted that reflective opportunities supported meaning making (e.g., empathizing with being seen as the "other," understanding tangible dynamics of power and privilege) and emotional processing.

The first author either personally visited the course or provided instructors with a recruitment script to invite students to participate in a study about their experience in the multicultural counseling class and describe their rights as a participant. Links to the survey, including the informed consent document and measures, were distributed electronically at the end of the course, with a total response rate of 68.6%. We offered various incentives across universities, per instructor preference, including $5 for completed surveys, raffle for a $25 gift card, and donation to a social justice–oriented organization.

The final sample consisted of 70 counseling trainees (with listwise deletion, this n varies slightly and will be reported for each analysis), with 58 women (82.9%), 11 men (15.7%), and one participant who did not indicate their gender (1.4%). The mean age of the participants was 27.98 years ($SD = 8.01$). Participants' racial/ethnic backgrounds were reflective of typical counseling programs, with the majority identifying as White ($n = 50$, 71.4%), followed by 12 identifying as Black/African American (17.1%), three as Latina/Latino/Latinx or Hispanic (4.3%), three as multiracial (4.3%), one as Asian (1.4%), and one as Native American (1.4%). (Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.) Regarding sexual orientation, 61 participants identified as heterosexual (87.1%), five as bisexual (7.1%), and four as lesbian (5.7%). Most participants reported belonging to a religious group ($n = 41$, 58.6%) or indicated being spiritual ($n = 21$, 30.0%). Five participants reported a disability (7.1%), whereas the majority did not ($n = 65$, 92.9%).

Instruments

Participants completed the measures in the order presented below. First, we constructed demographic questions to capture a broad range of self-identified multicultural identities in the areas of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, spirituality, nationality/immigration status, language, and ability. Responses to these questions were categorical, with the option to provide an open-ended response for participants wishing to identify themselves in an unlisted way.

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). Next, participants completed the PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) with respect to the emotions they experienced throughout their immersion experience, noting that this might refer to "something you experienced at one moment or consistently throughout your time at the site." The PANAS has previously been

applied to measure emotions in the moment they are occurring, across various intervals of time, as well as in response to specific events. The PANAS is made up of 20 items, each an emotion word (e.g., "excited," "jittery") that participants rate using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very slightly or not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*). Responses are summed for two subscales (Positive Affect and Negative Affect), with higher scores indicating higher overall presence of that affective valence. This measure has high internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$ and above) and low negative intercorrelations between the Positive Affect and Negative Affect subscales (Watson et al., 1988). The PANAS also has high external validity, with relationships to measures of psychological distress (Watson et al., 1988). In the current study, the coefficient alphas for the Positive Affect and Negative Affect subscales were .86 and .90, respectively.

Crowell Lowery-Multicultural Training Reactance Scale (CL-MTRS). We used the 22-item CL-MTRS (Lowery et al., in press) to measure participants' degree of resistance to aspects of their multicultural counseling course. In line with reactance theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981), multicultural reactance in this measure includes cognitive, behavioral, and affective components that can be directed toward the course topics, facilitator, and processes (e.g., reactions to assignments and lecture). Items are separated into two response formats, with the first 10 items (e.g., "The topics covered in this course are irrelevant to my education") rated on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) and the next 12 items (e.g., "It seems like I'm always on guard in this course") rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*most unlike me*) to 6 (*most like me*). Lowery et al. (in press) observed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$) and convergent validity with student ratings of the level of effectiveness of the instructor. In the current sample, the coefficient alpha for the CL-MTRS total score was .86.

Data Cleaning and Analysis

All analyses were conducted in SPSS (Version 24). An a priori G∗Power analysis (Version 3.1; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) for a hierarchical regression with a medium to large effect yielded a target sample size of 52. A total of 70 surveys remained after removing cases that did not have complete responses to the demographic questionnaire, the PANAS, and the CL-MTRS. Basic assumptions of normality and multicollinearity were upheld for all variables as evidenced by quantile–quantile plots and Pearson product–moment correlations below the accepted value of .70 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Results

First, we conducted preliminary analyses. In three separate one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs), we did not observe any statistically significant differences in reactance scores ($n = 59$, $F = 0.81$, $p = .495$), negative affect during the immersion activity ($n = 61$, $F = 2.34$, $p = .083$), or positive affect during the immersion activity ($n = 61$, $F = 2.39$, $p = .078$) across universities. Although we chose to collapse trainees from different universities for subsequent analyses, observed power was low for each preliminary ANOVA (.21, .56, and .57, respectively), suggesting that the nonsignificant results could be attributable to a Type II error. Similarly, we observed no statistically significant differences between trainees of color and White trainees on reactance ($n = 59$, $F = 0.01$, $p = .911$), negative affect ($n = 61$, $F = 1.16$, $p = .285$), and positive affect ($n = 61$, $F = 2.83$, $p = .098$). Again, these nonsignificant results were

susceptible to low observed power. We proceeded with this caution in mind and offer further comment in the Discussion section.

Overall, PANAS subscale scores indicated that students experienced markedly higher average positive affect ($n = 61$, $M = 34.26$) relative to negative affect ($n = 61$, $M = 19.97$). Reactance was not significantly correlated with either the full Positive Affect or Negative Affect subscale of the PANAS. This finding may indicate that diffuse measures of affect lose some explanatory power in that they do not capture the specific emotions activating trainee reactance. By considering each emotion item individually as opposed to using Positive Affect and Negative Affect subscale scores, we were able to provide a more focused analysis of key emotions in cultural immersion as well as better respond to the existing literature. Our choice to enter a single-item measure into our model is supported for parametric analyses given that the Likert-type response format we used contained five options and acted as continuous data (Gogol et al., 2014; Harpe, 2015). Additionally, individual PANAS items have been analyzed previously (e.g., Ready et al., 2011).

Table 1. Correlations Between Reactance Scores and the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Items

Item	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*r* With Reactance
Interested	4.22	0.85	60	−.22
Distressed	2.11	1.05	61	.10
Excited	3.53	1.19	60	−.37*
Upset	1.87	1.19	61	.05
Strong	2.78	1.38	59	−.24
Guilty	2.21	1.21	61	.36*
Scared	1.95	1.19	61	.22
Hostile	1.33	0.73	60	−.24
Enthusiastic	3.60	1.17	60	−.29
Proud	2.57	1.28	60	−.18
Irritable	1.68	1.03	60	−.08
Alert	3.69	1.04	59	.17
Ashamed	2.07	1.21	60	.15
Inspired	3.97	1.09	60	−.21
Nervous	2.98	1.31	60	.12
Determined	3.47	1.13	60	−.09
Attentive	4.22	0.85	59	.15
Jittery	2.07	1.10	60	.24
Active	2.97	1.16	60	−.14
Afraid	1.88	1.11	60	.30

Note. A Bonferroni-adjusted alpha level of .005 was used to conduct significance tests (calculated from a family-wise error rate of .10 divided by the 20 items per comparisons). *$p < .10$.

To address the first research question, we examined descriptive statistics and produced a correlation matrix to assess the relationships between emotion items in the PANAS and reactance scores (see Table 1). Significance tests for each emotion item were conducted using Bonferroni-adjusted alpha levels of .005 per test (calculated from a family-wise error rate of .10 divided by the 20 items per comparisons) to reduce the risk of a Type I error (Howell, 2013). We selected the liberal $p < .10$ given our relatively small sample size for this analysis ($n = 58$; Lehmann & Romano, 2005; Thompson & Snyder, 1998) and the literature base demonstrating

the relevance of emotions to multicultural education (Lehmann & Romano, 2005; Thompson, 2002). Of the negative emotions listed, guilty emerged with a statistically significant positive correlation to reactance ($r = .36$, $p = .005$). With regard to positive emotions, we observed a significant negative correlation with reactance for excited ($r = -.37$, $p = .005$). Of note, the emotion items enthusiastic and afraid fell from significance with the Bonferroni correction in place, suggesting that guilt and excitement have both practical significance and incrementally more statistical significance (see Table 2). Thus, we concentrated our focus on these two particularly relevant emotions (i.e., guilty and excited), given their strong correlations with reactance under our conservative parameters and their resonance with the literature (e.g., Atkins et al., 2017; Spanierman et al., 2008).

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Changes in Multicultural Training Reactance

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β	*t*
Step 1				
Guilty	3.79	1.42	.34	2.67**
Step 2				
Guilty	3.58	1.34	.32	2.68**
Excited	−3.93	1.33	−.35	−2.97**

*Note. N = 58. **p < .05.*

In a hierarchical regression conducted to address the second research question, we entered guilty in the first step and excited in the second step to determine their relative influence on reactance scores (all remaining analyses were set to a standard alpha level of .05). The total model was highly statistically significant ($n = 58$, $F = 8.45$, $p = .001$), with the cumulative impact of these two emotions explaining 23% of the variance in reactance scores for the multicultural class. A combination of both a negative emotion (guilty; $\Delta R^2 = .11$, $p = .01$) and a positive emotion (excited; $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $p = .004$) contributed significant incremental variance in predicting reactance scores.

To examine how the presence of both negative and positive emotions might be interacting in the immersion activity to produce reactance scores, we conducted an exploratory analysis by fitting separate regressions for trainees with low and high excitement. These subsets were created based on the response format (i.e., participants who responded 1 = *very slightly or not at all*, 2 = *a little*, or 3 = *moderately* formed the low-excitement subset; those who answered 4 = *quite a bit* or 5 = *extremely* composed the high-excitement subset) in order to distinguish trainees with above-average excitement. Creating subsets with this method is replicable across other samples of the population and therefore has greater practical significance.

Additionally, the nonlinear relationship between excitement and reactance warranted splitting the data to more simply examine meaningful differences between groups of high- and low-excitement participants (Streiner, 2002). Frequencies for each anchor were such that 27 participants qualified for the low-excitement subset and 33 participants met the high-excitement subset criteria. Both high-excitement ($n = 33$, $M = 2.15$) and low-excitement ($n = 27$, $M = 2.19$) participants yielded remarkably similar average guilt scores, suggesting that guilt was present to the same degree regardless of excitement level. Even so, the effect of guilt on reactance was present only among low-excitement participants ($n = 25$, $R^2 = .42$, $F = 16.39$, $p = .000$).

Conversely, for participants with high excitement ($n = 33$, $R^2 = .01$, $F = 0.44$, $p = .51$), guilt did not heighten reactance.

Discussion

Counseling students in this study experienced a range of emotions throughout their selected cultural immersion activity, and these emotions affected the students' overall reactance to their multicultural training course. Perhaps of greatest significance, our results pointed to the impact that both positive and negative emotions might have on students' level of reactance with respect to the course, the material, and the instructor. Although positive emotions had higher average scores by item, only excitement had a significant relationship to reactance. Conversely, negative emotions had lower average scores by item, with only guilt emerging as significantly related to reactance. Although guilt is routinely cited as a relevant emotion for MCC education in the literature (e.g., Pieterse et al., 2015; Tummala-Narra, 2009), excitement emerged as an equally powerful emotion for consideration only in the current study. Our findings also suggest that the presence of emotions, in general, does not occasion MTR; rather, specific emotions can put someone at greater risk of or protect against developing a reactive stance toward MCC. The connections that excitement and guilt shared with reactance are noteworthy, in that these two emotions may convey important information about students' level of personal engagement with the course material and immersion activity, as well as their resulting reflection.

Additionally, if students felt high excitement, their feelings of guilt did not translate into heightened reactance. It was not that these high-excitement trainees did not experience guilt; instead, it seems that their experience of guilt was shaped by their comingled feelings of excitement. Student emotions seemed to have a more complex and varied presence in the multicultural counseling class than previous researchers (e.g., Paone et al., 2015; Parker et al., 2004; Watt et al., 2009) have suggested. The interaction between negative and positive emotions is such that we may not be able to understand or predict the impact of any one emotion (e.g., guilt) without also understanding the presence of other central emotions (e.g., excitement). There seem to be situations in which negative emotions can elicit greater reactance and presumably lower the potential for MCC development, such as when guilt is present to such high degrees that it is paralyzing and leads students to seek a return to the status quo (reactance). It is also imaginable that possessing purely positive emotions, such as excitement, could suggest complacency, with students perhaps bypassing tougher realizations or grappling with discomfort with respect to privilege. Thus, positive and negative emotions should not be considered inherently good or bad, particularly in the context of cultural learning.

The lack of observed differences in reactance, negative affect, positive affect, and key emotions across universities and student race/ethnicity is also noteworthy. Even though there was variation in immersion activities across universities, this did not seem to dramatically alter students' experiences. The range of immersion activities with varying levels of intimacy and duration still produced an emotional response within students. This makes sense in the context of the literature, given that students have observed strong emotions within themselves at the first, low-level encounter with their chosen immersion population (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2011). Perhaps over time, trainees experience additional emotions or resolve these initial emotions; however, differing degrees of immersion can spark the inner experiences necessary for growth in MCC.

In terms of student race/ethnicity, the observed similarities could be a function of the fact that students were intentionally challenging themselves. In other words, if students truly choose an immersion activity that requires them to have contact with people they have biases toward and are unfamiliar with, then these learning opportunities can be as challenging for students of color as they are for White students. This is especially important in light of previous research suggesting that minority students feel that their MCC is not prioritized in the learning activities of multicultural counseling courses (Seward, 2014). Immersion experiences may be one way that all students can pursue meaningful development, regardless of their current level of knowledge or previous exposure to and depth of contact with diverse individuals.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study contained advancements and limitations in the understanding of MCC developmental processes. First, although student reactance has implications for MCC development, we did not measure or draw connections between emotions, reactance, and students' practical applications of MCC. In future studies, researchers could examine the impact of learning experiences on outcome variables directly related to counseling practice, such as supervisor report of students' MCC, multicultural self-efficacy, or ability to conceptualize clients culturally. Additionally, a quasi-experimental research design incorporating pre- and posttests on such outcome variables would further help determine how immersion activities affect student MCC development.

Second, low power decreased the ability to compare immersion activities and ratings of students of color and White students. As a result, we cannot definitively state that differences do not exist and encourage future exploration of variables such as the instructor's strategy for introducing the immersion activity, assigned point values, and their own assessment of the exercise and student response. Future researchers can clarify our findings further by identifying the specific elements of immersion activities that evoke emotion in order to better understand where variations across immersion type and student demographics lie.

An important extension of the present study would be to qualitatively and longitudinally examine the progression of emotions (and MTR) throughout the immersion experience. Researchers could then determine when guilt and excitement are reported during the immersion experience to more closely examine subgroups high and low in excitement. Additionally, this approach could provide contextual information such as the degree of emotional response that is sufficient for learning without being overwhelming, variations across students' emotions as well as how they managed these, and optimal immersion activities.

Implications

Collectively, the findings of this study have tangible implications for counselor education curricula, counselor educators, and students. Given the ubiquitous presence of emotions across various immersion activities, it is important that instructors normalize affective responses for students and offer opportunities to process emotions in multiple modalities (e.g., Burton & Furr, 2014). Instructors can facilitate open discussion of emotion by presenting emotions as an important source of information, not to be conceived of as good or bad per se, given that both

more positive and negative emotions are pertinent to MCC growth. To be sure, this perspective requires instructors to have established their own level of comfort in working with strong emotions and awareness around the emotions they have personally experienced in multicultural learning contexts (de Anda, 2007). Instructors' own self-reflection might enhance their recognition that each person's multicultural journey is distinct and requires a supportive environment in which to share nuanced emotions and realizations.

Because of the complex and wide range of emotions that students may experience, counselor educators likely need to provide different outlets for students to sort through their emotions and thoughts during the immersion experience. By providing formats with varying levels of comfort and risk, instructors allow learners to engage to the degree they are able. Such opportunities for reflection can include full classroom discussion, partnered conversations, and small groups facilitated by advanced students. In addition, journals or reaction papers (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2011; Watt et al., 2009) encourage deeper personal understanding while also allowing for confidential instructor comments. Perhaps early on, these more individual and private activities are preferable for students prone to reactance.

Although scholars have tended to focus on managing negative student emotions in immersion activities and multicultural counseling courses (Hipolito-Delgado et al., 2011; Parker et al., 2004), there is also merit to cultivating positive emotions or expectations related to the MCC course and activities. Specifically, counselor educators could consider how they might engender excitement in students. One approach may be through self-disclosure (e.g., de Anda, 2007; Tummala-Narra, 2009), in which instructors describe the range of emotions they have experienced interacting with people who are culturally different, while also emphasizing the joys available in new learning and connection. Alternatively, instructors could assemble a panel of practitioners committed to developing their MCC to address students, highlighting the practical application of course content to the work of counseling, lessening reactance, and building interest in this area.

Finally, this study contributed additional evidence that immersion activities can provide a useful learning opportunity for all students. Regardless of their racial/ethnic background, all students seemed to experience a range of emotions during engagement with their selected populations. It seems important for counselor educators to then implement some form of cultural immersion that empowers students to meet their own unique learning needs while still choosing a population with which they have biases and struggles. Similarly, by addressing both positive and negative trainee emotions, counselor educators can embody the strengths-based focus of the counseling field and the goal for MCC development to be an active commitment as opposed to a passive requirement—while also lessening reactance. Such an approach encourages students to pursue cultural immersion activities that are both engaging and difficult for them, while also offering support and catalyzing the necessary critical reflection of students' complex inner experiences.

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