

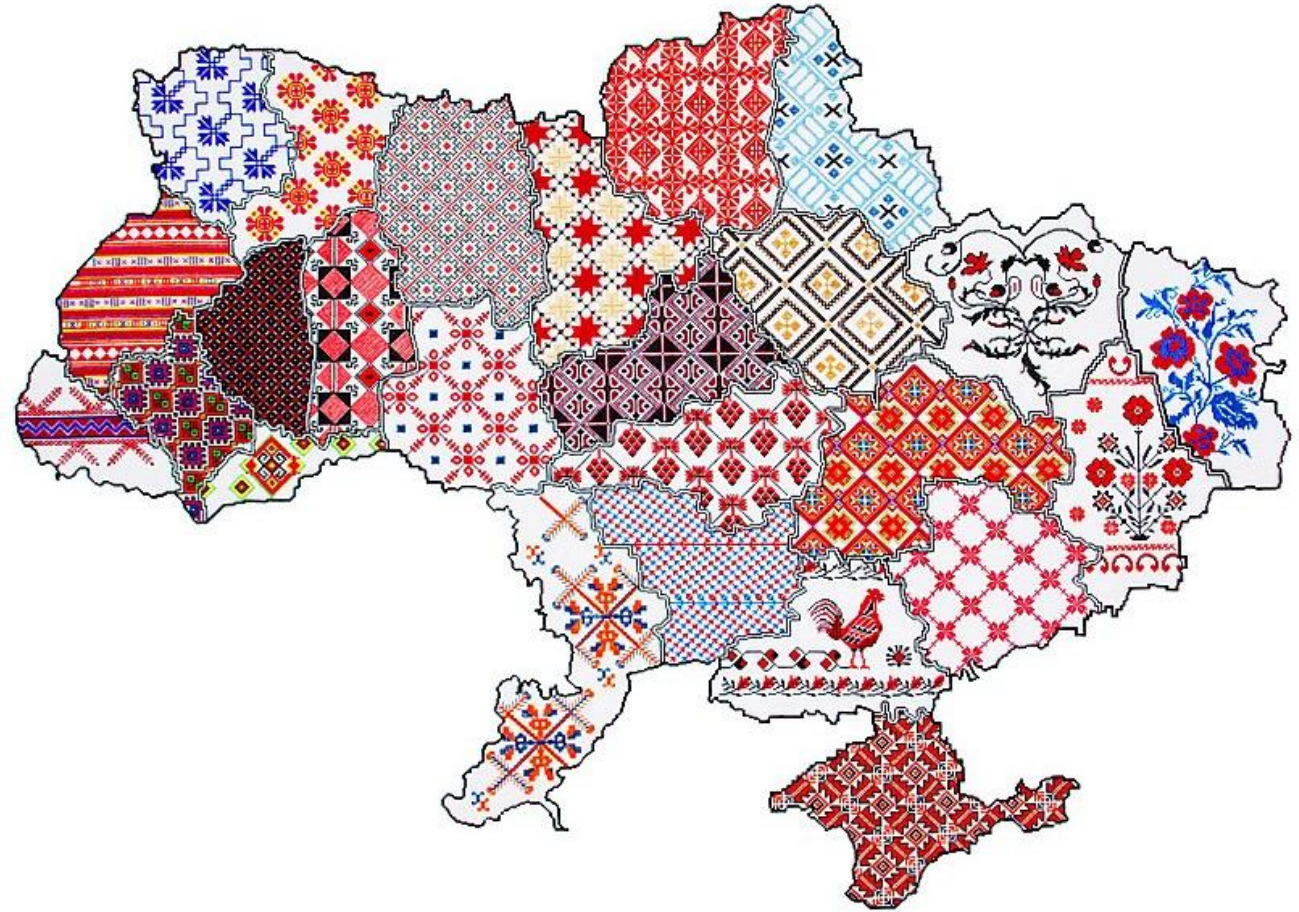
Experiential Learning and Ethnocultural Empathy Toward Ukraine

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Agenda

- Cultural Artifacts
- Self Assessment
- Lecture
 - Ethnocultural Empathy
 - Humanitarian Crisis
 - Independent Research
- Self Assessment
- Discussion
- Checkout



Empathy

- Empathy is a skill that can be taught (Khatod, 2024).
- Lack of empathy toward immigrant groups can stem from upbringing and media exposure, and can result in prejudice, aggression, and xenophobia (Khatod, 2024).
- At the individual level, lack of empathy results in avoidance of outgroups and at an international level can result in genocide and war (Wang, Tai, Ku and Galinsky, 2014).

Ethnocultural Empathy

- Those who have limited exposure to diversity can engage in programming to increase multicultural understanding (Cruz and Patterson, 2005).
- Factors that may impact empathy include minority or majority affiliation, geographic region, politics, warmth, and a tendency toward dominant or submissive attitudes and behaviors (Newman et al., 2023).

Empathy Toward Immigrant Groups

- Immigrants are often considered an outgroup and are perceived as a symbolic threat to norms and cultural expectations of the host country (Khatod, 2024).
- Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 resulted in a full-scale war and brought 400,000 Ukrainian refugees to Canada and the United States; 76% being women and children (Operational Data Portal, 2025).

Humanitarian Crisis in Ukraine

- Nearly 4 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced, and nearly 7 million Ukrainians are refugees around the world (UNHCR, 2025).
- In Ukraine, there is limited access to water, energy, gas, healthcare, education, and protection (UNHCR, 2025). Nearly 13 million Ukrainians need humanitarian assistance in 2025 (UNHCR, 2025).
- In 2022, 15 million people were reported to need mental health care and 44% of children showed signs of PTSD (The Lancet, 2024).
- Russia has continued to target hospitals, with the WHO confirming 1,973 attacks on health facilities, transport, staff and patients since 2022 (Hyde, 2024). The war will have long term effects on rebuilding infrastructure, healthcare and mental health of the people.









Temporary Pathways to the United States

- The Lautenberg Program has supported 14,000 Ukrainians since 2018, and U4U has provided stay in the United States for 2 years to 170,000 Ukrainians since 2023 (U.S. Department of State, 2024).
- Often required of these programs is sponsorship from a relative in the United States and to participate in English language classes while in the United States in order to receive public assistance and apply for work eligibility.

Immigration

- New York State is a large resettlement area with an established population of those of Ukrainian descent. Central New York including Syracuse, Utica, and Rome is home to about 10,000 Ukrainians (Tampone, 2022).
- Resettlement agencies in this area, like Catholic Charities, reported resettling over 1700 Ukrainian refugees since 2022 (Catholic Charities Family and Community Services, 2025).

Local Community

- These areas have well established resources and active diaspora, with Ukrainian cultural centers and programming like dance and singing, language classes, various churches, sports leagues, credit unions, and markets.
- Ethnogenesis











Ukrainian Culture & Dance

- Ethnographic writing has been important in preserving the distinct features of Ukrainian regional embroidery (Shchybrya and Overchuk, 2023).
- Understanding and connecting to the various regions based on lineage, family heirlooms, and personal trips to hand pick items instills additional meaning.
- Ukrainian ethnic dance is more than recreation. It is a source of identity expression and belonging.

The Present Study

- Truly empathizing with immigrant and refugee populations, like Ukrainians in the United States, is complex when exposure to this group is limited.
- Counselors, educators and other professionals must consider tradition, sociopolitical context, geopolitical events, and their own ethnocultural empathy in their work.
- The purpose of this study is to emphasize the impact of experiential learning on ethnocultural empathy.

Dance as Identity: Ukraine

- A multicultural event was coordinated on campus at a small liberal arts college.
- The event was free, available to students and the community through word of mouth and social media.
- The event included a performance by 5 volunteer instructors of a local Ukrainian dance group, each dressed in varied regional Ukrainian folk dress.



Methods

1. The event began with a pre-test, then a prompt to stop and observe a performance of three dances.
2. Between each dance, the researcher shared information about the culture, costuming, and humanitarian crisis.
3. Participants then had an opportunity to try some Ukrainian dance steps, with instructors as models, and participants spread out throughout the dance studio.
4. Afterward, participants could ask questions of the dancers who varied in immigration status.
5. Then the post-test was administered.

Hypotheses

- Prior to participation, attendees would have lower levels of cultural awareness, contact, empathy, and acceptance.
- After participation in the cultural event, attendees will have higher levels of cultural awareness, contact, empathy, and acceptance.

Participants

- To participate in the survey, participants had to be at least 18 years old.
- In all, N=30 participants engaged in the study.
 - Age: 22 to 69 (M= 36.5)
 - Ethnicity was primarily white (n= 22).
 - Graduate students= 14, n= 9 were community members, n=6 were faculty or staff, n=1 was an undergraduate student.

Measures

- **Empathic Feeling and Expression Subscale** (4 items) : “I share the anger of those who face injustice because of their racial and ethnic backgrounds”.
- **Acceptance of Cultural Differences Subscale** (3 items): “I prefer people to speak English”.
- **Cultural Contact Scale** (4 items): “I I like to learn about other ethnic customs, rituals and ways of life”.
- **Affinity and Animosity in Solidarity with Ukraine** (4 items): “Ukraine is having a hard time, which was not self-inflicted; hence, we should help”.

Results

Table 1. Subscales and cronbach's alpha for internal consistency

Subscale	Cronbach's Alpha Pre-Test	Cronbach's Alpha Post-Test
Empathic Feeling and Expression	.63	.33
Acceptance of Cultural Differences	.74	.66
Cultural Contact Scale	.71	.37
Affinity and Animosity in Solidarity with Ukraine	.87	.76

Results Continued

Table 2. Paired samples t-tests revealed significant changes

Subscale	Pre-Test	Post-Test	T-Test
Empathic Feeling and Expression	M= 5.7 (SD= 1.58)	M= 6.47 (SD= 1.10)	t(52)= -2.18, p= .02
Acceptance of Cultural Differences	M= 4.6 (SD= 1.30)	M= 5.2 (SD= 1.03)	t(55)= -1.98, p= .03
Cultural Contact	M= 6.4 (SD= 1.55)	M= 7.13 (SD= 1.57)	t(50)= -2.18, p=.02
Solidarity with Ukraine	M= 5.57 (SD= 2.11)	M= 6.6 (SD= 1.57)	t(54)=-2.15, p= .02

Discussion of Findings

- The findings from this study suggest that engaging in experiential learning activities can increase ethnocultural empathy.
- Participants may not have fully understood or processed the crisis before.
- Allowed for examination of textiles, but also deeper connection of dancers to regional lineage and family heirlooms.
- Physical immersion in dance and engaging in discussion with dancers of varying generational and immigration status provided exposure; hearing the perspective of the dancers, spoken accent, command of the language, and connection to home and host cultures.

Implications for Multicultural Programming

- Multicultural programming can take many forms, including coursework, workshops and peer-counseling.
- In previous years, colleges have invested significant resources toward decreasing prejudice and counteracting anti-diversity attitudes (Mallinckrodt et al., 2014). But in January of 2025, The White House issued a Presidential Action to end diversity, equity and inclusion programming (DEI).

Implications for Counselors

- Increased ethnocultural empathy is associated with better outcomes in training, teaching, and service provision like counseling and healthcare (Newman et al., 2023).
- Accept a *universal-diverse orientation*
- Increasing experiential learning across the lifespan and across disciplines can increase cultural humility and help put ethnocultural empathy into practice.

Questions



Your Experience

- What is your comfort level or experience with clients whose first language is not English?
- Do you work with immigrant, refugee or international students?
- Do you organize or participate in multicultural programming at your college?
- Are you able to create more immersive experiences?

Assessment

Compare

- Refer to your self assessments pre and post lecture.
- Have any areas changed? Why or why not?
- Note, items 3, 8, 9, 10, 11 are reverse coded.

Checkout

Session 6: Experiential Learning and Ethnocultural Empathy Toward Ukraine

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