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# Encountering emotions during international fieldwork: Developing emotional intelligence and resilience to support innovative pedagogies

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**Royal  
Geographical  
Society**  
with IBG

Advancing geography  
and geographical learning

# Structure of talk

- Introduction – the emotional geographies of undergraduate fieldwork
- What are emotional intelligence and resilience?
- Developing international fieldwork practice – adopting innovative field L&T practices
- What are students' and tutors' experiences of fieldwork and how do they affect L&T?
- Supporting innovative pedagogies

# Introduction

- *“Learning itself is an intrinsically emotional business”* (Claxton, 1999:15)
- *“We have no choice but to recognise the emotional contours of teaching and learning. Ignoring these dimensions won’t make them go away. In learning and teaching, emotions are ever present. Ignoring or supressing these emotions harms students and teachers alike.”* (Liston, 2018: 115-116)
- Domains of learning: cognitive; psychomotor/ kinaesthetic; affective; conative (Bloom et al., 1956; Krathwohl, 1965)
- Fieldwork strongly influences the affective domain (Boyle et al., 2007)

# Emotional geographies and emotional intelligence of international fieldwork

- The importance of relationality - not just to explore the self or the emotion of others but how feelings might connect with those of their subjects (Bennett, 2004; Bondi, 2005)
- Blackman (2007) discusses a hidden ethnography that plays a key role in the production of knowledge.
- The researcher cannot fully understand the impacts of their emotions on the collection of fieldwork and the creation of knowledge (Punch, 2012)

Can fieldwork experiences help develop an emotional intelligence, deepen a sense of understanding and promote resilience?

# Emotional geographies of international fieldwork

- Emotional experiences are heightening during (international) fieldwork
- Experiencing place is integral to learning (Marvell & Simm, 2015)
- Everyone will react and respond differently - different motivations and behaviours (conative domain)
- Strongest emotions stimulated by physical and/or socio-psychological challenges – both place and field activities

# Emotional intelligence (or labour)

- Emotional intelligence (EQ) is *“the capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”* (Goleman, 1998: 317)
- Important to be aware, acknowledge and develop EQ and encourage resilience in our students (and tutors)
- In our teaching, we need to:
  - (1) Understand how emotions affect students
  - (2) Become aware of our own emotions whilst teaching and positionality
  - (3) Devise effective ways of managing EQ for L&T

# Emotional intelligence and resilience

*(borrowed from Hill et al., in press)*

- **Resilience** – ability to adjust to adversity, to maintain equilibrium, retain some control over environment and continue on in a positive manner (Jackson et al., 2007)
- **Self-efficacy** – a person's perception that they have got the skills and capacity to undertake a particular action or task (Bartimote-Aufflick et al., 2016)
- **Self-regulation** – ability to control one's behaviour or thoughts appropriate to given context or situation (Cook & Cook, 2014)
- **Wellbeing** – sustained positive mood and attitude, health, resilience and satisfaction with self, relationships and experiences encountered (DEECD, 2010)



# Developing our international fieldwork practice

**Sorrento, Italy** - field presentations (Marvell, 2018)

**Boston, USA** – primary research projects (McGuinness & Simm, 2005) and departmental conference (McGuinness & Simm, 2003)

**Barcelona** - student-led peer teaching and learning (Marvell et al., 2013; Simm & Marvell, 2015), reflective field diaries (Marvell & Simm, 2018)

# Characteristics of our fieldwork pedagogies

- **Encountering** liminal/borderland spaces
- **Responsibility**, control and power
- **Co-partnership** and **co-production** – teaching peers (and tutors)
- Working and **sharing** with peers
- **Empowerment**
- Changing **staff-student power** relations
- Developing academic **scholarship**
- **Transformative** learning, through experience and **reflection**
- *For more details see: Marvell et al. (2013); Hill et al. (2016); Marvell & Simm (2018)*

# Experiencing fieldwork: (A) Place

## (1) Preconceptions of place and initial reactions

- *“Wrongly, I now appreciate, I started to form my first impressions ... early on during the bus ride from the airport. How disappointing – just like any other European city.”* (student notebook, Barcelona)
- *“I didn’t feel particularly different being in Spain ... as the surrounding area did not feel, look, or smell in a way that could conjure up the thought of Barcelona in my head’* (student reflective essay, Barcelona)
- *“I felt conscious of my safety at all times as I was entering a foreign environment and had perceived notions ... it was hard to take in all the events and culture.”* (student notebook, Barcelona)
- *“The little alleys [and] buildings were typical of what I had expected but was slightly annoyed by the fact they were now home to some tackie [sic] tourist shops and bars.”* (student notebook, Barcelona)

# Experiencing fieldwork: (A) Place

## (2) Engagement with place

- *“From the first day of being in situ, I was overwhelmed by what I saw.”*  
(student notebook, Barcelona)
- *“I felt myself feel out of place, and even a little embarrassed about looking like a tourist, which seems an unusual notion as I was surrounded by tourists.”* (student notebook, Barcelona)

# Experiencing fieldwork: (A) Place

- *“I remember the Boqueira market as an assault on the senses, of smells, taste and noise related to feelings of joy.”*  
(student reflective essay, Barcelona)
- *“After touring El Raval on one group's presentation, I felt my eyes were opened to a whole new side of the city – darker, more dangerous and more conflicting.”*  
(student notebook, Barcelona)
- *“I felt a heightened level of hostility ... our group were heard discussing together by a local in their residence who peered out over their balcony and abruptly slammed closed their window. This made me slightly edgy.”* (student notebook, Barcelona)

# Experiencing fieldwork: (B) Learning and teaching strategies

## (3) Types and format of field activities

### Group projects:

*“Unexpectedly, preparing for this talk put a strain on previously formed relationships as stress built up within our group as some members felt others ... were not contributing fully.”* (student reflective essay, Barcelona)

### Field presentations:

*“When it came to our presentation I recall a ... sense of trepidation ... I was out of my comfort zone.”* (student reflective essay, Barcelona)

- Unfamiliar place + L&T activity + (summative) assessment + feedback = strong emotional response and often reaction

## (4) Feedback and formative/summative assessment

- - Appropriate and tactful feedback needed

# But it can be transformative!

- *"Looking back on my time... before the fieldtrip, I can see how closed-minded I was. I had not anticipated how enlightening the fieldtrip would be, or how much my knowledge and skill range would expand."* (student notebook, Barcelona)
- *"There was a time during the field trip where one member let their anxiety get to them, their confidence fell... The rest of us leaped to our friend's aid to reassure them... Our patience levels were tested but it was a moment of personal growth for all of us."* (student notebook, Barcelona)
- *"I noticed that students somehow were more engaged with the presentations when their fellow students were doing them ... I felt that I wanted to listen what other students had found out about that certain place."* (student reflective essay, Barcelona)
- **The importance of regular collective dialogue, informal chats with groups and individuals, and reflective field diaries**
- **Reflecting on and sharing experiences AND emotions**

# It's not just for students, tutors have to develop their emotional intelligence too!

Becoming an emotional intelligent teacher (Mortiboys, 2012):  
acknowledgement, listening, dialogue, responding

## **(1) Being self-aware**

- The hidden curriculum (Cotton *et al.*, 2013)

## **(2) Aware of others**

- personal circumstances differ (Glass, 2014)
- (Un)familiarity with Place - different experiences of students to staff

## **(3) Relating to our students - empathy**

## **(4) Creating environment - openness, trust and mutual respect**

## **(5) Responsive L&T strategies – reflective practitioner**



# Conclusions

- Innovative modes of fieldwork can be conducive to integrated emotional intelligence/ labour as a learning objective

## Strategies:

1. **Familiarisation** – pre-departure, arrival (Simm & Marvell, 2015)
2. **Exploration** – free time to explore (Simm & Marvell, 2015)
3. Changing **staff-student power** relations – co-partnership (Marvell et al., 2013)
4. **Gentle critique** (Hill et al., in press)
5. **Open dialogue and rapport**
6. **(Self-) reflexivity** (Marvell & Simm, 2018)

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