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# Gaining a 'sense of place': Students' affective experiences of place leading to transformative learning on international fieldwork

## Abstract

**Keywords:** Place, affective domain, experiential learning, international fieldwork

## Introduction

International fieldtrips are a distinct and integral feature of most geography degrees in the UK. Increasing opportunities for international travel have enabled students to benefit from experiencing other places, landscapes and cultures (McGuinness & Simm, 2005). The benefits of fieldwork for academic development, skills acquisition and practice and social integration are well rehearsed (Kent, Gilbertson & Hunt, 1997; Fuller, Edmondson, France, Higgitt & Ratinen, 2006; Fuller, 2011; Stokes, Magnier & Weaver, 2011), but there are significant academic and personal challenges associated with international fieldwork, such as logistics (Marvell, 2008) and encountering the 'other' (Smith, 2008; Robson, 2002). An on-going debate focuses on the extent to which students begin to comprehend and understand how that place functions. Can students unravel the often complex and changing geographies from secondary sources, a limited time spent in-the-field and, most critically, limited contact with local people, often with language barriers? Or does it remain an artificial and superficial experience hampered by the voyeuristic perspective of the 'tourist gaze' (Urry,)? How do students' perspectives change by encountering an unfamiliar and often challenging environment? As Smith (2008: 79) describes, "fieldwork practice itself is an intensely embodied and experiential form of learning and teaching" that requires engagement with that locality. Not only do students have to comprehend the geography of an unfamiliar environment, but often have to deal with their own relationships towards that place. Studies have focused on the affective domain and how the learning and teaching strategies adopted can influence students' engagement with the fieldwork locality (Boyle *et al.*, 2007; van der Hoeven Kraft, Srogi, Husman, Semken & Fuhrman, 2011).

Savin-Baden (2008: 7) describes learning spaces as places of engagement where "often disconnected thoughts and ideas, that have been inchoate, begin to cohere" as a result of being in a place or position that stimulates a creative shift in perception or understanding. In other words, academic situations are viewed with a new and fresh perspective. New and unfamiliar localities are often liminal in nature, requiring the student to create their own relationship within that place. Often, the appropriation of space for a specific group, such as tourists, is challenged when student groups are 'plunged' into more unfamiliar and challenging cultural environments or districts (Nieto, 2006). Such spaces of learning can be viewed as disruptive spaces that challenge the individual student to 'make sense' of what they are experiencing (Savin-Baden, 2008). International fieldtrips clearly fit into this classification; the direct experience of being *in situ* offers multi-sensory exposures to environments (Tuan, 1977), and the opportunities for exploration create a greater sense of adventure and discovery. Such experiential learning leads to greater interaction with that environment, which can lead to transformative learning at both personal and academic levels (Savin-Baden, 2008). Being *in situ* also enables theory to be better linked to reality, principally an appreciation of

interconnectivity and scale and, by applying a geographer's 'eye', to unravel the palimpsest of geography, history, society and culture in order to better understand that place. First-hand experiences enable more relevant and contextualised learning, resulting in active and deep learning, which is often transformative (, 2013). However, as della Dora (2011) recognises, it is not just international fieldtrips that offer unfamiliar localities; students may encounter unfamiliar environs in their own country. In addition, some commentators suggest that there is a tendency for fieldtrip destinations to gravitate towards English-speaking nations (McGuinness & Simm, 2005), whilst others make use of representatives with some English competence (Smith, 2006).

Using Krathwohl's taxonomy of the affective (Krathwohl ., 1964), which deals with the processes of emotions, feelings and values, can help us to understand better the academic and personal issues encountered by students undertaking international fieldtrips. The immediacy, relevance and emotional engagement of being *in situ* can capture students' attention and increase motivation (Ballantyne, Anderson & Packer, 2010). During immersion in an unfamiliar and challenging environment or situation these attributes are heightened to strongly influence the affective domain (van der Hoeven Kraft *et al.*, 2011), often resulting in different individual responses (Ishii, Gilbride & Stensrud, 2009). Wright & Hodge (2012) describe the emotional geographies of cross-cultural experiences on fieldtrip as a "profound learning experience redolent with emotion" which is transformative and challenges students' own perspectives of societal connections and diversity. Boyle *et al.* (2007) report that, whilst experiencing some apprehension and anxiety, students recognise the positive outcomes of being challenged by an unfamiliar environment. This is further explored by Glass (2014), examining how local and external factors can generate positive and negative experiences that may affect students' experiences of a particular place or trip. Students respond in different ways to field stimuli and learning and teaching methods (Dunphy & Spellman, 2009). Van der Hoeven Kraft *et al.* (2011) discuss different affective domains, examining how self-efficacy, prosocial opportunities and place attachment influence students' motivations to engage and learn.

The ways in which students and staff encounter a particular place are important. Traditional teaching approaches of 'stop-and-look' at a location often only provide a segmented and blinkered perspective, but the whole fieldtrip experience, from start to end, should be recognised as part of the learning experience. 'Mobile geographies', whereby place can be experienced by transiting through that space, changes temporally as well as spatially, has been under-recognised by the pedagogic literature on fieldwork. Undertaking 'slow geography', involving taking slower forms of transit, such as walking (Bassett, 2004), can immerse participants in their surroundings because they observe more at a steady pace or 'drift' (Anderson, 2013), and enhance their spatial connectedness through exercising navigational skills. This counteracts the sense of geographical 'unconnectedness' and temporary disorientation caused by, for instance, emerging from a station on an underground transport network into an unfamiliar locality.

The use of appropriate learning and teaching strategies is important to facilitate engagement and understanding of a particular locality or experience. Different media have been trialled to encourage students, firstly, to observe and critique their surroundings in a more academic manner and, secondly, enable communication of the identified geographical narratives of that place. These media have included posters (Saunders, 2010), repeat photography (Lemmons, Brannstrom & Hurd, 2013), podcasts (Anderson, 2013) and audio-guided tours (Wissmann, 2013). Saunders (2013) critiques the use of one-way audio-guides, and argues that self-authorship is important for engaging

students with their environment. Scholarship and self-authorship can be used as a vehicle for influencing the affective domain and thereby facilitating transformative learning, leading to a more critical engagement with place. A reflective and metacognition approach, focusing on self-awareness, is viewed as essential for self-awareness and deeper learning (Moon, 1999; Ballantyne *et al.*, 2010). Self-reflexivity, with appropriate scaffolding by tutors, becomes particularly important when faced with unexpected and uncomfortable encounters (Glass, 2014). Field journals and reflective diaries are often the most effective way of facilitating this (Dummer, Cook, Parker, Barrett & Hull, 2008).

This study examines the use of student-led learning and teaching presented by Marvell *et al.* (2013). Based on final year undergraduate fieldwork in Barcelona, Spain, this study students' experiences of 'place' on international fieldwork; secondly, examine how and why student's feelings and emotions change from their preconceptions during the fieldtrip to acquire a sense of place; and, thirdly, to evaluate how transformative is the development of a sense of place to their learning, with the affective domain, and to explore the links. Through a series of staff- and student-led learning situations, students were exposed to a series of active learning scenarios which have the potential to facilitate psychological change through self-awareness (Cook, 2008). This paper attempts to better understand how the learning and teaching strategies, combined by immersion in an unfamiliar environment, affect students' learning experiences through the affective domain (Krathwohl) and cyclic experiential learning (Kolb) combined with critical reflection (Mezirow) and transformative learning.

### ***What is, and why consider, 'place'?***

A place can be considered as a palimpsest, a multi-faceted landscape which exhibits multiple identities that may vary temporally, spatially and individually. Place consists of physical, social and cultural aspects, the site-specificity of the locales bound together by meanings, symbolism and a sense of belonging (Sampson & Goodrich, 2009). Whereas the terms 'environment' or 'locality' imply the quantification of geographical characteristics from a reductionist perspective, the term 'place' is interwoven with subjective interpretations of the 'outsider' and the 'insider'. Cresswell (2004, p.11) defines place as "a way of seeing, knowing and understanding the world. When we look at the world as a world of places we see different things. We see attachments and connections between people and place". Tuan (1975: 164) argues that "to know a place well requires long residence and deep involvement", whereas a short stay can only provide an instantaneous and mostly visual snapshot. However, gaining a 'sense of place' is central to the understanding of a geographer of a particular locality. Tuan (1975) further comments that time spent in a place does not ensure experience, but engagement with that place. The adoption of learning and teaching strategies to enable students (and staff) to 'encounter' and get 'know' a place better (Burgess & Jackson, 1992). For the student, the acquisition of a greater sense of place can, firstly, help to understand the characteristics and functioning of a particular locality; secondly, help to gain a fuller understanding of the complexity of geographical issues within the local context of a case study; thirdly, to reconcile academic knowledge and understanding with reality and practice. Although the visitor may not gain a comprehensive 'knowing' of a place, by employing academic skills it is hoped to reveal not only the symbolism and meanings of the place to the people (the 'other') who inhabit that space, as well as a more acute awareness of the influences on the visitor (the 'self') to that place.

## **Educational theory**

Now, as educators, can we understand the learning experiences of our students in a complex and challenging environment of an international fieldtrip? And how can we use theory to inform our learning and teaching strategies to enhance students' learning from their experiences? Of the domains, cognitive, kinaesthetic (or psychomotor) and affective, cognitive is the most commonly-used way of understanding of how learners acquire knowledge and develop understanding. The foundational work of Bloom's cognitive taxonomy of educational objectives (Bloom, Englehart, Furst, Hill & Krathwohl, 1956), consist of the cumulative hierarchy of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Anderson & Krathwohl (2001) subsequently revised Bloom's cognitive taxonomy, replacing *Knowledge* with *Remembering*, *Comprehension* became *Understanding*, and higher-order attributes further switched the focus to active nouns such as *Applying* and *Analyzing*. Krathwohl (2002) also conceptualised knowledge within factual, conceptual, procedural and metacognition dimensions. The affective domain, concerned with values or more correctly the importance learners place upon what learn, has received the least attention. Corresponding roughly with the Bloom's cognitive domain stages, Krathwohl's affective domain of learning (Krathwohl, Bloom and Masia, 1964) is similarly built on a hierarchy of steps, described as: firstly, *Receiving* describe the stage of being aware of or sensitive to the existence of new ideas and being willing to tolerate them; secondly, *Responding* refer to actively responding to a new challenge to one's own knowledge, understanding or expectations; thirdly, *Valuing* mean a willingness to engage with new ideas to make a value of judgement; fourthly, *Organisation* relating the new value to those one already holds and bringing it into a harmonious and internally consistent philosophy; culminating in, fifthly, *Characterization* refer to acting consistently in accordance with the values the individual has internalised. The interaction of Bloom's and Krathwohl's schemes suggests that learning is reinforced by knowledge building on experience by the learner adapting prior knowledge and understanding to new, often challenging, situations. Mezirow (1990) examined further how, as learners, we make sense of an experience, and subsequently use this interpretation to some purpose (such as decision-making or action) that results in meaning becoming learning. Mezirow (1990) recognises the educational 'baggage' that we all carry, our frames of reference affecting the way in which we interpret our experiences. Such 'baggage' includes habitual and perspectives of meaning. The former are what we expect to see and think, whilst the latter are where new experiences are assimilated into one's own past experiences to frame interpretation (Mezirow, 1990). Central to resolving internal conflicts between our perception and cognition is critical (self-) reflection, a process by which epistemic, sociocultural and psychic distortions in our reasoning and attitudes can be acknowledged and new meanings validated. Such critical thinking can ultimately lead to transformative learning (Brookfield, 2012), especially when challenged by unfamiliar encounters. As Kolb states, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984: 38) and such experiential processes are cyclical involving experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation (Healey & Jenkins, 2000).

Traditional geography fieldtrips mostly address the cognitive (e.g. knowledge being imparted by tutors to students on a tour) or kinaesthetic (e.g. collecting data in the field under direct or semi-independent supervision). Such challenges are often mostly acutely encountered during residential fieldtrips particularly to distant and unfamiliar localities (involving short or long haul air travel). Integral to understanding students' responses to international fieldwork is for tutors to be aware of Pederson's (1995) culture shock model. Whilst traditional learning and teaching approaches

typically fail to address the affective domain satisfactorily, innovative educational approaches on fieldtrips can be utilised to enhance students' learning.

### **Background to the module**

This study is based on the 'International Fieldwork' module offered the BSc Geography course at Bath Spa University, UK. an innovative student-led teaching, that is appropriate for (international) fieldwork at higher levels. This is done through placing responsibility on the students so that there is a vested interest in others as well as their own learning undertake critical self-appraisal of field experience. This optional module is delivered through a series of lectures and workshops, culminating in a 5-day fieldtrip to Barcelona, Spain. For a typical class size of 25-30, students work in 5-6 groups of 4-5 students per team. The remit is to deliver a 90-minute presentation supported by an activity in-the-field with the aim to encourage students to apply prior learning and understanding to a project in a new environment. Groups identify a topic to research, plan and prepare. Each group submits a pre-placement report outlining their project, proposed itinerary and activity, which receives formative feedback from tutors. The structure of the fieldtrip a staff-led familiarisation tour, then reconnaissance time, followed by two days of student-led tours. Students are also involved in the logistics of fieldwork, to take possession, thereby making their learning more meaningful. Using a draft script with supporting handouts, groups make a reconnaissance trip to their field sites in order to amend, update and practice their presentation and activity. The field activity element is designed to encourage the student audience to participate fully in the presentation, to encourage increased engagement thereby promoting more interaction and debate. Each morning, students are given a self-reflective question which is either written in their field or delivered in a group video-blog undertaken in-the-field. Typical daily reflective questions include: (i) What are your first impressions of the city?; (ii) what is 'place' and what gives Barcelona its sense of place?; and, (iii) how have your impressions/ perceptions of the city changed and why? At the end of the fieldtrip, an over-arching self-reflective theme is announced, which draws upon students' experiences and self-reflective entries during the field course. Students are given time after the fieldtrip to reflect and to consult the pedagogic literature a ssay

The methods are designed to engage students more with their environment, affecting students across the multiple registers of learning. These domains are affected by main types of 'experience': firstly, through immersion in the general environment of that place; and, secondly, the student-led teaching strategy whereby students learn from their peers about that place. For the latter, the cognitive domain (groups researching and teaching about the topic) and kinaesthetic domain (through the field activities) influence affective This study focuses on the students' general experiences influencing the affective domain during the fieldtrip. Self-reflection is an important tool for understanding changes in affective domain, so the daily reflective entries written during the fieldtrip were used. Self-reflection that is immediate or recent offers unique insights, most notably an immediacy, which can reveal freshness, emotion and honesty from being in an unfamiliar place and/or circumstances, before such feelings subside, blurred with subsequent experiences, or forgotten. Soliciting immediate reactions may reveal the personal journeys of students during the fieldtrip, and whether the learning and teaching strategies encourage students to engage more with the field environment. also offers a contextualised perspective by taking place *in situ*, relevance (the there-and-then), it can be used to challenge perceptions and make sense of initial reactions, as

well as being personal. A thematic and coded analysis was undertaken to identify recurring ideas within the sources and allowing triangulation of responses (see Marvell *et al.*, 2013). Whilst some of the quotes are generic, many can be attributed to specific stages in the learning and teaching strategy, in particular whether preparatory stage or delivering or receiving a field presentation. The experiences of student-led teaching and learning strategies were mapped against Krathwohl's taxonomy of the affective domain.

he reflective revealed a series of themes revealing the personal journeys of the students during the fieldtrip, and providing insights into the affective domain which lead to growing awareness and understanding of that place.

### ***Preconceptions and expectations***

Preconceptions are informed by students' prior (travel and life) experiences. Preconceptions based on prior visits may be polarised, either 'rose-tinted' recollection or some negative experience entrenched internally over time, which may be or reinforced by preparatory activities such as navigating Google Streetview. Secondary sources such as guide books and marketing imagery of the destination will reinforce sanitised tourist images. The personal observations and advice of tutors may influence students in diverse ways as unintended messages (Cotton, Winter & Bailey, 2013).

### ***Encountering the unfamiliar***

Upon arrival at the destination, students are faced with a mix of emotions as they encounter the unfamiliar and vibrant locality such as the city centre of Barcelona. For some, Pederson's *Honeymoon* stage is short-lived, leading to disappointment and rejection. Even the time of arrival and weather can have a major impression. For instance, students comment on being "overwhelmed" and "quite stressful" and claustrophobic in crowded tourist areas (#1, Student 11, F, , 2014) [B2], or disoriented by late arrival in the dark at an unfamiliar place. The typically high expectations, fuelled by the mix excitement, anticipation and travel fatigue, are sometimes initially tarnished by negative impressions, such as littered streets or graffiti. Such a negative counter-reaction of disappointment appears to be most acute during the earliest stages of arrival at the destination, such as the journey through industrial and urban wasteland near the airport, or the crowded and over-commercialisation of tourist areas, equating to the *Disintegrated* stage of Pederson's model of culture shock:

*"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."* (#2, Student 12, M, , 2013) [A1 to 1]

First impressions often focus on tourist aspects, relating to unexpected similarities and differences with their own society, such as the prevalence of menus written in English in tourist areas or the same chains of shops as their own local town. Initial experiences of the local people range from welcoming to hostile. Whilst recognising the cosmopolitan 'feel' to the city, cultural differences are sometimes initially expressed in a disparaging or even mildly xenophobic manner as "being different to me but not me" (#3, Student 10, M, , 2013) [B2]. Internal conflicts may arise in the minds of students, triggered by their own expectations and immature relationship with that place, such as



being “surprised to see animals being sold on the street [of Las Ramblas]” (#4, Student 20, F, , 2012) [B2].

However, as students spend more time in the city, they reveal growing awareness that it is themselves, as visitors, who are ‘out-of-place’ in relation to both the environment and local people, corresponding to Pederson’s *Reintegration* stage. The initial perceptions of being branded as a tourist and ‘not fitting in’ evolve into a wrangling with a self-perceived stigma and even guilt of being a tourist. Students bemoan the saturation of the locality with tourists but recognise that they are part of the issue:

*“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.”* (#5, Student 10, M, , 2013) [B2]

A sense of ‘self’ and ‘other’ became a recurring theme. There is a tendency to consider the ‘self’, with sentiments such as “felt welcoming, safe” common in entries. For some a sense of otherness is affirmed by experiences, reinforcing the perceived threat of the ‘other’ to the security of ‘home’. Regardless of gender, feelings of discomfort, and sometimes fear, are expressed in relation to the crowded tourist areas (such as Las Ramblas), the dimly lit maze of narrow streets (typical of the Barri Gotic and El Raval districts), particularly at night, or graffiti on the shutters of shops. In particular, disquiet was expressed about the demographics and gender imbalance of the El Raval district, particularly in the evenings. Such concerns are reinforced by prior warning provided by previous visitors, guide books or tutors feeling “I only felt less safe because I had been warned about pickpockets before I arrived.” (#6, Student 13, F, , 2012) [A2 to A3]. This may result in over-cautiousness and distraction from their studies:

*“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.”* (#7, Student 5, F, , 2013) [A3 to B2]

Prior warnings about personal security are reinforced when, in tourist areas, concerned local people offer advice and warnings. Often, a contradiction arises in commentaries where the student feels more comfortable in tourist areas but remains concerned about the risk of petty crime.

### ***The desire for ‘authenticity’ of experience***

Some students clearly yearn for a perceived more ‘authentic’ experience, bemoaning that the tourist areas are too tourist-oriented and English-speaking. Students’ own preconceptions of what should be a ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ experiences are projected on to that place. In particular, there was the blurring of what is ‘real’ for local people and what is aimed at tourists, for instance:

*“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.”* (#8, Student 8, M, 2012) [A3 to 3]

A recurring theme is that students quickly recognise that venturing away from tourist areas is important for gaining more representative insights of what the city is really like for the inhabitants:

*“My guide book ... appeared to ‘rank’ sites around the city in order of importance, forcing a particular impression on a generic tourist, but I’m glad we saw a mix ...and not just [what] we ‘had’ to see.” (#9, Student 11, F, , 2014) [A1 to C1]*

The demarcation between tourist (familiar and ‘safe’) and non-tourist (unfamiliar, threatening) areas that exists in the minds of some students is only broken down by exploration of those environs, either independently or through staff-led activities.

### ***Exploration and (self-) discovery***

The structure and schedule of the fieldtrip was designed to offer opportunities for students to explore the city. Firstly, the staff-led familiarisation exercise upon arrival in city provides a structured and supported way of gaining confidence to navigate the city, whilst starting to break away from a tourist perspective. On the first day, during self-navigated group tours around contrasting central districts of the city, students filmed a video blog to encourage more observant and critical geographical perspectives of the geographical issues they discovered:

*“At first the task of creating a short video seemed daunting but ... filming meant I took [in] more of what was around me.” (#10, Student 25, F, , 2011) [B1]*

This group activity clearly enabled students to feel more confident and to start to understand the place by adopting a more critical academic perspective of their new surroundings. As their confidence to navigate grows, their ability to make sound judgements about exploring the city clearly improves and “after a few minutes of walking around, we started to understand the layout and felt confident enough to use smaller back streets” (#11, Student 3, M, , 2012) [B2 to B3].

Secondly, the reconnaissance day is important for each group to exploring their study sites. Students comment on how different the place actually turns out from preconceptions based on secondary sources. Finally, allowing students free time to explore the city independently cannot be underestimated as part of the learning process and experience of the city, initially staying close to the hotel but, with growing confidence, exploring other areas:

*“The north of El Raval, on the other hand I felt at ease, ... the bars are full of students. However, we came across some saying no tourists allowed! – Unwelcoming, but I think it’s good in a way.” (#12, Student 13, F, , 2012) [2 to 3]*

When given the opportunity to explore the city, students clearly gain confidence and start to feel more comfortable and secure with their environment. Exploration and a sense of discovery clearly enhanced their sense of place:

*“Being let ‘loose’ as it were, and being left to discover an area on our own [reconnaissance day] without influence from tour guides or those in the know (lecturers) ... allowed us to effectively bond with ... [our locations] and left ... us with feelings of excitement.” (#13, Student 2, M, , 2011) [B2]*

Once students become more familiar with the destination, such initial ‘culture shock’ appears to subside, and students expressed a growing sense of feeling comfortable with their surrounding urban fabric such as the historic buildings or eclectic collection of specialist shops found in some districts (Pederson’s *Autonomy* and *Interdependence* stages). Students may be distracted by

differences such as visual statements of discontent and territorial expression, namely graffiti which may be re-conceptualised in an over-romanticised perspective. There was initial surprise for local issues, such as the patriotism displayed by the Catalan flags on the households, and a growing awareness and empathy for the political issues:

*“The yellow/red flag surprised me ... I hadn’t realised how important this seems to be for the locals.”* (#14, Student 4, F, , 2014) [2 to 3]

In particular, recent political events have significant influence on students’ perceptions and experiences. For instance, students quickly notice and enquire of tutors about the commonplace Catalan pro-independence flags. One year students encountered an austerity demonstration by ; the next day the cohort thought the noise emanating from street was another demonstration but were surprised when they discovered it to be a cultural procession led by school children. Encountering the unfamiliar can prove a liberating but also a threatening experience and needs to be carefully managed. Some concerns can be reinforced by negative experiences, such as “it felt as if we were not quite welcome, we were obviously tourists ... and so it felt a little awkward” (#15, Student 20, M, , 2012) [B2 to B3].

### ***Gaining a ‘sense of place’***

The reveal how students’ start to engage with the city. Spatial differences are a common theme, recognising the varied characters of districts of the city, acknowledging “multiple identities ... making it difficult to conceptualise Barcelona as a whole one city” (#16, Student 20, F, , 2011) [4]. Urban change and transformation, usually referring to building constructions, is another key theme, but the “mix of old and new” architecture is, perhaps surprisingly, not mentioned too frequently.

There was an increased awareness of history and, more perceptibly, of layers of representation and symbolism in the urban fabric and culture, such as the monumentalisation of public spaces with art or street names celebrating historical Catalan figures. Students started to recognise issues of national identity, often stimulated by the profusion of Catalan (pro-independence) flags, often describing it with “pride” and “community”. Strongly influenced by academic and tourist sources, students try to make sense of the Catalan identity through architecture and art. A “sense of belonging” is often mentioned in association with the historic, although the term is poorly conceptualised in students’ accounts.

### ***Defining place influenced by the affective domain***

How do the students’ experiences influence the affective domain, facilitated by the fieldtrip’s structure and learning and teaching strategies lead to better engagement with place and affect both their personal and academic development? A qualitative indicator is to consider student definitions of place. Students initially see place as the unique physical and social characteristics of a locality, but start to adopt a more critical interrogation of the concept. Interpretations include an emphasis of community and identity, which evolve into a sense of ‘meaning’ to the inhabitants and their utilisation of that space:

*“It is more than just a geographical space, it evokes emotions and feelings, ‘place’ provides an understanding of the people who use an area and for what purpose.”* (#17, Student 35, F, , 2013) [B3 to B4]

*“A place or sense of place can also be created by associations and stories of an area...”* (#18, Student 36, essay, 2011) [C1 to C2]

There is often recognition of historical legacy, primarily in terms of architecture but also in terms of culture and identity. Students start to recognise that it is “subjective in nature and valued differently between different groups of people” (#19, Student 30, essay, 2011) [C3] with “a sense of attachment – idea[s] of blood and belonging” (#20, Student 1, essay, 2011) [C3] and “a sign of togetherness” (#21, Student 4, , 2014) [C3], as manifest through political symbols such as Catalan flags.

For some, place is seen as a personal perspective, which clearly shows a maturing awareness of how an individual student perceives a place. Such recognition was then extended to how others, whether local people or tourists, may perceive that place differently and uniquely, leading to “multiple and contested meanings” (#22, Student 26, , 2011) [C5 or B5]:

*“It is clear that different people can have very different feelings towards a place, and although each ‘space’ may appear the same for everyone, each ‘place’ can be very different.”* (#23, Student 35, F, , 2013) [B5]

The recognition of the student’s role as ‘other’ in that place may often develop an awareness of place from different perspectives, and a more acute self-awareness of the transient nature of the character of places:

*“[On the reconnaissance day] we found a ... playground ... it was full of children playing happily and gave a positive sense of place. However, when we came back on our tour the children had gone and two very seedy men were in their place. Instantly, the sense of place had changed.”* (#24, Student 15, , 2013) [B3 to B2]

A sense of a student’s relationship with the place, and their reconciliation with theory, clearly evolves with emotional maturity during the fieldtrip. For instance, drawing upon Massey’s (1993) ideas one student recognises that connections are created and broken: “Place is a fluid entity, constantly changing its appearance to the observer” (#25, Student 12, M, , 2013) [B5 or C5].

### ***Changing relationships with place***

By the end of the fieldtrip, there is clear evidence of the realisation that preconceptions are invalid. This may, in part, to a growing sense of feeling comfortable in that environment, but also to a personal maturing through influences on the affective domain. A more nuanced sense of place starts to evolve through this process, but deep-rooted concerns of personal security or gender issues may persist. For some, there is recognition of the naivety of the tourist perspective:

*“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.”* (#26, Student 4, M, , 2013) [C2]

For some this awareness is associated with a particular occurrence, whilst others report that their “changing perceptions have been gradual” (#27, Student 4, M, , 2013) [2] through progressive exploring of the city challenging preconceptions gained from secondary sources. A sense of place is undoubtedly created by the overall novelty of the field experience (Cotton & Cotton, 2009), but powerful memories can also be created by individual occurrences:

*"Incredibly I managed to glimpse a street parade on the last day of a Catalan tradition where people wearing giant masks of kings and queens were surrounded by people playing music."* (#28, Student 17, F, , 2014) [1]

As students' confidence in being in that locality grows, their perceptions of that place develop. In particular, students have developed as the various aspects and layers of the urban palimpsest are discovered, with the recognition of a city in constant flux and transformation:

*"I definitely underestimated the textural [sic] nature of the city. There are so many more layers and contrasts and histories than I could ever have imagined."* (#29, Student 9, , 2012) [B5 or C5]

They also start to compare what they see to their own surroundings back at home and growing awareness of social and political issues facing the city such as housing inequality or the pro-independence movement.

*"My initial impressions ... [were of] a homogenised city that has experienced cultural dilution as a result of its focus on tourism ... soon faded as I experienced more areas of the city."* (#30, Student 10, M, , 2013) [3 to 5]

Increased awareness of the environment also typically means that students become more aware of their relationship with that environment, recognising their own intrusion in that place and, most notably, as a researcher:

*"[Whilst in El Raval] I sensed hostility towards us and windows were shut as we walked past and took notes."* (#31, Student 13, F, , 2013) [C1]

*"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."* (#32, Student 7, M, , 2012) [B1 to B2]

Most students express a more positive experience as their time in the city progresses, but the intensity of the field experience, combined with the responsibility of presenting in situ (cf. Marvell *et al.*, 2013) resulted in increasing levels of fatigue. However, for a minority of students, their affective experiences appear to induce negative sentiments. One student continued to find the city "overbearing" and sensing "the darker side and powerful gothic of the city ... with increased intensity as time went on" (#33, Student 9, M, , 2013) [B3 to B2]. Another student acknowledged that he had set "his expectations were initially too high as [he] wasn't completely connecting with any of the districts" (#34, Student 9, M, , 2013) [B2 to B1]. Perceptibly, one student recognises that the viewer's empathy is important:

*"I have realised that some peoples' sense of place is undeveloped as they may find it difficult to connect with their emotions. Because of this they cannot relate a place with personal feelings."* (#35, Student 4, M, , 2011) [C5]

In order to better understand how students' learning experiences are transformed during this model, Table maps the learning activities prior to and during the fieldtrip onto Krathwohl's taxonomy of the affective domain. As revealed by personal reflection, transformative learning occurs in different ways at different stages for individuals. Students can show progression through

the hierarchy of Krathwohl's stages (progressing vertically down Table ) or through experiencing the learning and teaching strategy (progressing horizontally across Table ). Table identifies several cycles at which transformative learning can occur and be reinforced by subsequent or different learning experiences. The student-led teaching strategy employed by Marvell *et al.* (2013) means that all students will encounter each cycle. The first affective cycle (A1-5) occurs prior to the fieldtrip, during planning and preparation for the group presentations, students acquire expectations and challenge their preconceptions mainly from secondary sources. The second affective cycle (B1-5) during the reconnaissance and field delivery of the group's presentation, and the third affective cycle (C1-5) refers to the experiences as the audience of each field presentation. A fourth, and generic, affective domain is experienced during non-formal teaching times, when students are travelling or exploring the city. During each cycle, students are affected by all domains and, dependent upon an individual's level of engagement, each student can be challenged at any of these stages. For example, students visiting their field sites for the first time will often discover that place to be different from their expectations and preconceptions [B2 of Table , and a student listening to a field presentation may more critically question what a fellow student says (cf. Marvell *et al.*, 2013) [C3 of Table ]. Thus students may progress either collectively as a group or individually tudents progress through Krathwohl's hierarchy at different stages, routes and rates of progression through the learning and teaching cycles. To illustrate this, Table maps the quotes from this paper onto this model. For Table , the categories for delivering (B) and receiving (C) a group field presentation are clumped together as both are experienced by all students at some point during the field trip, and so the desired learning outcomes are more important that the route. Natural progression can occur up the hierarchy during a cycle (e.g. Quote 6 shows progression from A2 Responding to A3 Valuing) or as a student moves from one learning and teaching phase to another (e.g. Quote 8 progresses from A3 to 3 revealing clear application to being *in situ*). Most quotes show a single-step progression in Krathwohl's hierarchy, suggesting logical development, but some reveal a 'jump' by employing higher-level cognitive skills (e.g. Quote #30 moves from 3 to 5 of Table ). However, whilst most of the selected quotes reveal clear progression following Krathwohl taxonomy, some can display retrogression in their academic; for instance, Quotes #24 and #33 show negative reinforcement of preconceptions (moving from B3 to B2). However, the situation is complex, for instance with a peer audience reacting not only to what the presenting group is telling them, reacting with their immediate environs, and resolving these with his/her own knowledge, understanding, experiences and preconceptions.

[INSERT TABLE HERE]

As the quotes reveal transformative change can occur in different ways and at different times: for some it arises from a dramatic event (Quote 28), gradual, fast or slow, or even subconscious. As such the quotes reveal more about the individual than about the place. There is little evidence to suggest that students are writing what they believe tutors want to read; tutors provided a framework for self-reflection (mostly facilitated through the daily reflective questions issued on the fieldtrip) within which students had freedom to express themselves. However, some students clearly struggle to articulate why their observation is important (e.g. Quote 36). However, the quotes evidence that metacognition and critical reflection are clearly achievable by either the delivering (B) or receiving (C) field presentations, whilst the lack of A4 or A5 indicates the experiential value of fieldwork.

***How and why do changes in the affective domain happen?***

Firstly, being *in situ* and the value of cultural immersion cannot be underestimated (Pederson, 1995; Nieto, 2006). Students acknowledge that seeing the locations for first-hand was important. When planning and preparing their group talks, students use reconnaissance tools (such as Google Earth and Street View) and reading (e.g. local history and guide books, journal articles). However, students commonly report that the reconnaissance visit to each group's study site is different from expectations. Often, students are surprised by the opportunities that were not previously spotted during the planning stage before the fieldtrip. This means that students have the opportunity to adapt new examples and materials into their talks. The particular day or time a locality is also visited is also important, and can often have a significant influence on personal views of the city. Secondly, interacting with a place also appears important for understanding connections, and unravelling how that place functions. In particular, visiting non-tourist areas gives students insights into the broader functioning of the city and its people. Students start to differentiate between different sections of society, and between tourists and local people, displaying a keener eye for observation and growing awareness and understanding of the inter-relationships in that place. Thus students start to make links between, for instance, identity and a sense of place. Such feelings are often expressed in subjective terms, such as "a good feel *for* the city" [italics inserted for emphasis], whilst some students clearly start to relate their prior research to the geographical contexts that they discover *in situ*. Some students express a growing desire to take something away from the experience that will inform not only their academic studies, but develop them personally:

*"Learning to appreciate a different culture and way of life of people is important to take away with me."* (#36, Student 6, , 2011) [B3 or C3]

reating an affinity with a place appears to be important to this process. projects on a topic developed semi-independently as a group delivered *in situ* having taken control of a section of the fieldtrip not only creates a sense of 'possession' (cf. Marvell *et al.*, 2013) but also an affinity with that particular place. An integral part of this is the growing emotional attachment that students appear to develop. This is facilitated, firstly, by the translation of time and effort planning and preparing to the intense, shared experience of the delivery of the group talks:

*"When participating in a field activity, ... I found myself becoming far more involved and emotionally attached than I would be in a lecture."* (#37, Student 3, , 2011) [C2]

As Saunders (2013) notes, self-authoring is important for creating a sense of 'possession' of the fieldtrip. The function of leading the field class, presenting a group talk and activity to peers *in situ* leads to students becoming more involved, partly because of the investment of their time and effort in preparing and planning talks but also because of being *in situ* and mutual respect of each group's contribution (Marvell *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, the intensity and compatriot nature of the student-led teaching element results in an emotional attachment with the study site, which is then conveyed through their presentations and activities. Staff-led and delivered tours are typically restrictive and may lead to limited or selective engagement by students. However, providing students with the opportunities to navigate and explore the city for themselves can be a liberating experience for them. The benefits of free time to explore the city should not be underestimated, student experiences their fieldtrip notebooks. For instance, some students may develop a passion for local attributes, such as support for the local football team following a tour of the stadium or, more effectively, as a spectator attending an atmospheric evening game. Placing students out of their 'comfort zone' into borderland space of learning (Savin-Baden, 2008) is important, but must be

carefully managed. Some students may have concerns and fears reinforced, and may try to resist any transformative learning, whilst others will find the process liberating and display personal affective growth that will often be translated into more critical awareness and. Factors which may restrict enhancement of the affective domain include: firstly, preconceptions and the level of preparedness; the level of confidence to explore and interact with the environment beyond tourist areas; thirdly, the potential 'bubble effect' where the group's own presentation and assessment becomes all-consuming focus, limiting openness to experience other things; and, finally, the intensity of experience may heighten the senses, but may lead to feelings of being overwhelmed or fatigue, and so reflective time is needed. Marvell *et al.* (2013) critique that, whilst student group presentations and activities may be of variable quality and may compromise students' learning, their value in stimulating mutual respect and interest cannot be underestimated. Sharing their observations and experiences can prove effective for reflective and metacognitive understanding (Ballantyne *et al.*, 2010).

## Conclusions

As Burgess & Jackson (1992: 153) surmise, encountering an unfamiliar place requires the student "to open yourself up to the urban experience, and to describe and interpret the symbols and meanings that are conveyed through that experience." They offer sound advice that whilst, as an 'outsider' the student is not familiar with the local ways and subtle nuances of how society works, the students' perceptions may be more acute than the insider's habitual experience. Thus it is possible, even during a short stay fieldtrip, for the student to observe and make realistic interpretations of that place (Burgess & Jackson, 1992). However, this study has shown that students' experiences of fieldwork are complex and varied, and an understanding of these experiences can assist in the designing of effective learning and teaching strategies on international fieldtrips. Preconceptions are tempered with planning and preparation, but mild culture shock is common. Exploring the locality, either independently (free time) semi-independently (reconnaissance day) or staff-led activities are powerful agents for evolving personal relationships with the locality. This can be focused through self-authorship (Saunders, 2013). Taking responsibility for part of the field trip – delivery of a presentation and a field activity *in situ* – means the groups need to be well versed in the academic application of knowledge and understanding of geographical issues, as well as dealing with logistical issues, encountered at that locality. This naturally tends to create a greater sense of affinity and engagement with that place, which often translates to more involved learning. In addition, transit spaces, moving from locality to another, as well as 'free time' to explore and discover are often important but under-utilised spaces of learning, and need to be better integrated into the learning and teaching strategies adopted for fieldtrips. This may be an artefact of the self-reflection process, emphasises the need for training and practice in writing. Students' experiences on international fieldwork combine cognitive, kinaesthetic and affective domains. The cyclic nature of the learning and teaching strategy, involving student-led field presentations and activities, means that learning is experiential and promotes critical engagement. Also important the facilitation of reflection of the learning and teaching method the environment, and the students' experiences both aspects. The themes identified from the quotes show clear progression in the Krathwohl taxonomy of the affective domain, combined with Kolb's cycle of experiential learning, indicating that the student-led teaching approach is an appropriate strategy that facilitates transformative learning through experiential learning and critical reflection, and demonstrating that meaningful learning about a place can be gained even during a fieldtrip of short duration.



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