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Emotional geographies experienced during international fieldwork: an evaluation of teaching and learning strategies for reflective assessment

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Abstract

The benefits and challenges of international fieldwork are well rehearsed. However, understanding of students' affective experiences during fieldwork is less well developed. Little examination has been given to how tutors respond to the affective and emotional geographies that arise during international fieldwork which also affect perceptions of "place". Using the innovative strategy of student-led teaching of peers, this paper examines how, firstly, the emotional geographies on international fieldwork can be identified and, secondly, how tutors can respond with appropriate teaching and learning strategies to enhance the fieldwork experience of students in terms of their personal and scholarly development. Based on field courses to Barcelona, Spain, we analyse a range of media from video and oral interviews, field notebooks and reflective essays to reveal students' perceptions and emotions of participating in international fieldwork. Most revealing are the themes and issues raised by more "immediate" reflection undertaken in-the-field compared to the more "refined" and considered reflexivity completed after the fieldtrip. Such understandings of the emotional geographies can enable appropriate teaching and learning strategies to be employed.

Keywords Emotion; fieldwork; fieldtrip; pedagogy; reflection

Introduction

Encountering place on fieldwork is an essential element of students' geographical education. Exposure to new and different environments and situations acts as a stimulus to prompt a range of emotions and feelings, resulting in a response that may involve student (dis-)engagement with fieldwork, awareness of local geographical issues and a sense of place. This paper aims to evaluate how emotion is conveyed at different stages of a fieldtrip which can impact on the learning process. Students' experiences of place relate to the learning process through an experiential cycle as personal reflection and understanding evolves over time. Experiential learning is a key source of learning development (Kolb, 1984) and through critical reflection can trigger transformative learning (Mezirow, 1990). This paper builds upon the framework as outlined by Simm and Marvell (2015) by articulating the importance of emotional geographies experienced during international fieldwork and suggesting effective teaching and learning strategies.

Emotional geographies and fieldwork

Encountering a place has the potential to evoke a range of emotional responses which in turn helps to define a sense of place and a sense of emotional attachment (Marvell & Simm, 2016). This can be expressed through the sense or "feel" of a place which is made up of experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years. It is a unique blend of sights, sounds, and smells, a unique harmony of natural and artificial rhythms registered in one's muscles and bones. (Tuan, 1977, p. 184) Emotions have a vital role to play in our understanding and perception of place based on meanings and interactions (Pile, 2010; Urry, 2005; Wood & Smith,

2004). Therefore, emotions have the capacity to “shape the landscape of our mental and social lives” (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 1). Expressions of emotion are a form of communication as the individual is not just a receiver of information but actively responds emotionally which helps to define both the person and the place. Some people are attracted to places whilst others are repelled, “Emotion is central to the way people experience the world” (Geohegan, 2013, p. 41) and as such different experiences may lead to a different set of emotions and vice versa. The two are symbiotic in so far as a causal relationship between emotion and place exists. As Bartos (2013, p. 89) identifies, “Places exert a powerful influence on people’s feelings and knowledge productions, while people exert a powerful influence on and within place”. Feelings and emotions are an important aspect of place; as Smith (1993) states that a place is a piece of the environment that has been claimed by feelings. As such emotions enable us to identify with and “contribute to our situatedness and to the ways in which we relate bodily to the world, hence to our emplacement” (Berrens, 2016, p. 76). Emotions not only help to define ourselves but also the places that we interact with that “connect us to ourselves and to others” (Berrens, 2016, p. 76). This is reflected in the “emotional turn” in geography as it is recognised that emotions have an important place in our own and others’ work (Bondi, Davidson, & Smith, 2005).

The relationship between individual’s emotional reaction to place has been explored through the work of “‘psychogeography’, which explores the emotional impact of places” (Coverley, 2010 in Haigh, 2008, p. 25). Such impacts can affect the learning of students through a series of “dominant emotional message[s]” (Haigh, 2008, p. 28). Psychogeography stems from the work of Guy Debord who defines the term as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographic environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals” (Debord, 2006 [1955], p. 8). Yet the experiences are far from being precise as they are characteristically “disruptive, unsystematic and random” (Richardson, 2015, p. 1). Students are often placed in unfamiliar situations with heightened senses and emotions (Hill, Thomas, Diaz, & Simm, 2016) that can change with increasing familiarity (cf. Simm & Marvell, 2015). It is important that students are presented with opportunities to be curious about places and explore their own emotions in relation to their experience (Phillips, 2014).

Emotional geographies are also central within non-representational theory where happenings, events, moods, emotions, “flows” (Thrift, 2008; Vannini, 2015) and “rhythms” (Latham & McCormack, 2009) of everyday life are explored. Non-representational theory searches for meaning in a landscape emphasising the processes, movements, flows, and emotions through “a geography of what happens” (Thrift, 2008, p. 2). This approach focuses on place through its construction, lived experiences and evolution and as such places are “not just seen, but heard, smelled, and touched” eliciting an emotional response (Lorimer, 2005, p. 86).

Fieldwork is important in introducing students and staff to new experiences allowing them to experience a range of emotions as they travel from place to place. Staff and students may share experiences along with others who are also present, “Fieldwork should be seen as a shared achievement, and one that involves negotiating a range of subjective elements that might include emotions, skill-sets, intimacies and abilities” (Bhakta et al., 2015, p. 283). Not all staff and students may share the same emotions or even the same intensity of emotions. This is important in terms of understanding the multiplicity of emotional geographies that can occur simultaneously within place. As such, group dynamics may influence the emotional responses of individuals as separate groups of students may respond in a variety of different ways. The influence of group dynamics and peer pressure may influence an individual’s emotional response yet it may not always be clear whether the recorded emotional response is what the individual is experiencing or whether it reflects the

influence of the group (Suhay, 2015). Although group dynamics may influence an emotional response and ultimately emotional responses will shape group dynamics, “the role of emotions in groups is poorly understood” (van Kleef & Fischer, 2016) and deserves greater attention in academic research.

Emotional geographies, as experienced during fieldwork, help develop a heightened sense of place. Teaching and learning strategies may include developing empathy for local issues; addressing and overcoming preconceptions (Stokes, Magnier, & Weaver, 2010); helping students to overcome culture shock; facilitating transition through borderland spaces of learning (challenges induced by unfamiliar environment and/or situation, cf. Hill et al., 2016); and addressing latent issues of “otherness” (Monk, 2010; Smith, 2006).

Emotions are an intrinsic part of fieldwork as both students and staff will potentially experience a range of emotions that will help construct a sense of place. Unfortunately, the immediacy of an emotional experience is not always easy to express or capture (Bondi et al., 2005; Thien, 2005). Being immersed in a place, in situ, whilst on fieldwork has the potential to stimulate a variety of emotional experiences that students may be asked to reflect upon as part of their academic studies (Marvell, 2008). Traditional forms of fieldwork may not emphasise the role of emotion, an educational tour (descriptive-explanatory) often results in passive engagement whereas data collection (analytical/predictive) may result in students being distracted by the process of data collection rather than the wider geographical setting. Student-led learning, and in particular being in situ, provides a greater emotional engagement with place (Bondi et al., 2005) as students are using their senses in making a judgement based on their bodily experiences (Askins, 2009). Field-course notebooks or journals provide a chance to reflect upon a range of personal feelings and situations and contribute to the learning process (Park, 2003) but it is not certain to what extent this assessment tool can capture a significant range of personal feeling (McGuinness & Simm, 2005). Arguably the notebook or journal can only offer a limited but focused set of examples, but offers the possibility for students to explore their own feelings in greater depth and to reflect deeply on their feelings (Marvell, 2008). As a result of personal reflection through field-course notebooks it is not uncommon for students to express that they were becoming “emotionally attached” to the environment and being “overwhelmed” (Marvell, Simm, Schaaf, & Harper, 2013, p. 555). Reflective exercises set after the event may not attract the same level of emotion as experienced at first-hand. As Glass (2014, p. 81) identifies, “research exercises lacking the immediacy of field journals will likely address the same encounter in a less emotional manner than in coeval accounts.”

Emotional geographies are potentially difficult to capture during fieldwork, not just due to the immediacy of an event but also in terms of the level of articulation and the expressive skills of the student. Field notebooks, journals and reflective essays are often used to capture emotion as written accounts (McGuinness & Simm, 2005). Although these methods are tried and tested (Haigh, 2001; McGuinness & Simm, 2005; Park, 2003), some students may prefer to express their emotions through other media such as art, photography, music, poetry, dance, video blog (vlog) and other expressive forms (Phillips, 2015). Although these alternative forms of expression may yield new insights beyond that of more traditional forms, comparing written to visual accounts can present a challenge to the course tutor especially if aligning assessment criteria to award grades or marks. Such forms of assessment may constrict the possible range of emotions that could be experienced during fieldwork. Phillips (2015) identifies the benefits of playful and multi-sensory fieldwork where students are encouraged to collect sounds, climb, discover art and to “get lost”. Walking and other forms of exploration are also encouraged to encounter a range of experiences that can stimulate emotional responses (Bassett, 2004).

Yet there is a stigma around the recognition of emotion in geography fieldwork and its role in the production of knowledge (Punch, 2012). This is unfortunate as emotions are a key part of developing a sense of place and as such, the production of knowledge through lived-experiences. In addition, students may experience a strong positive or negative encounter that influences engagement and potentially influences their perception of place (Glass, 2015). Whatever method is used to capture the emotional experiences of students, temporal considerations need to be carefully considered as the further away from the experience, personal responses have the potential to become less emotional.

Tutors also need to be aware that students may become increasingly receptive to their innermost feelings or may attempt to block and avoid such messages as “emotions, feelings and values ... lead to perceptions of learning tasks (or moods) that help to determine students’ approach to learning activities” (Boyle et al., 2007, p. 301). It is important for students to verbalise (in written or other form) their emotional experiences as these are often what characterises a sense of place. Tutors or staff members have limited control over a student’s emotional experience and as a result some students may not wish, or have the skills to, reflect on their experience. It is therefore necessary for tutors to encourage the use of emotional language and expression even though this may seem at odds with traditional academic writing. Tutors may wish students to record and reflect on their experiences but this can be problematic when dealing with strong emotions as “students [may] choose to self-censor emotional experiences which instructors may want them to reflect upon” (Glass, 2014, p. 81). This makes the teaching and learning of emotional geographies potentially challenging. Tutors can incorporate formative and summative assessments that actively encourage students to express their emotions and reflect upon their experiences. These assessments provide a framework that enables students to explore and make sense of their experiences which in turn can lead to a deeper understanding of place.

The contribution of this paper is to highlight the importance of emotions in fieldwork as experienced through the practices of being in situ. The study discusses the relationship between place and assessment as identified through the teaching and learning strategy. By encouraging students to connect with their emotions and to reflect upon their involvement in a given situation, “direct experience can stimulate emotional connection and deepen understanding of ‘the other’” (Hope, 2009, p. 171), leading to a more enhanced and nuanced sense of place (Marvell & Simm, 2016).

Background to the module

The data gathered for this paper was collected as part of an international residential field course to Barcelona, Spain. It is a final year optional module at Bath Spa University that has previously included both Geography and Tourism Management undergraduates. The aims and objectives of the module are to encourage students to observe and encounter a range of different experiences and make the connection between people and place. Students should be in a position not just to observe but also offer a valid explanation of what they see and experience by identifying the interconnections between different places. The aims are to attain a geographical sense of “place”; be actively involved in logistical planning; deliver a student-led field presentation and field activity as a group; conduct independent and advanced research; demonstrate teamwork and project management skills; demonstrate confidence and ability to cope with unfamiliar environments; and to demonstrate critical self-appraisal of field experience and performance.

Students receive a series of lectures and workshops before the fieldtrip. The fieldtrip takes place over 5 days, 1.5 days are staff-led, 0.5 day is student-led reconnaissance and 2 days are student-led activities. There is an average of 30 students on the fieldtrip which comprises 6 groups of 5 students

working on a research topic based around delivering a presentation in situ. Detailed discussions of fieldtrip logistics and associated pedagogic approaches have been discussed elsewhere in the academic literature (Marvell & Simm, 2016; Marvell et al., 2013; Simm & Marvell, 2015).

Students are assessed through a variety of methods. The initial group pre-placement project report is Pass/Fail to state and refine a research project. The delivery of the presentation in situ and related learning activity accounts for 40%. Students are encouraged to record their experiences and associated emotions in a fieldwork notebook and to reflect on these emotions in a self-reflective essay, 20%. A daily reflective question is used as a formative assessment, providing students with a set of short focused pieces of reflective writing in their fieldwork notebook that they can use to help produce the self-reflective essay. Finally, a synoptic essay draws the fieldtrip experience together based around the concept of the transformation of Barcelona, 40%. In addition to the assessed field notebook and reflective essay, the study uses a range of media for recording student reflections with a view to evaluating their potential in providing an insight into a range of emotional geographies.

Capturing emotion

Students experience a range of emotions throughout the international fieldtrip based on their interactions with people and places, ranging from positive to negative, indifferent to confused; to capture this the students are required to complete a reflective notebook during the fieldtrip. Although some students complete this to reflect on their experiences throughout the day, many may leave this until the evening or later in the day. As such they are temporally at a greater distance from the event and so personal reflection may have erased a series of minor details or extremes of emotion may have highlighted certain experiences and not others (Talarico, Berntsen, & Rubin, 2009). The levels of emotion experienced by an individual affects the level of detail that they can recall (Christianson & Loftus, 1991; Trammell & Clore, 2014). Time can also affect the level of recall and also the student's overall attitude towards the experience (Nadelson & Jordan, 2012). The production of a reflective essay at the end of the fieldtrip is therefore relying on the detail contained in the reflective notebook and on the personal recall of events and situations. Anecdotally, it became obvious to staff that students were often in a heightened emotional state during the fieldtrip being anxious and expressing concern about preparing and delivering their student-led activities. These emotions did not appear readily in the written fieldwork notebooks or reflective essays which tended to suggest that students had either filtered out extremes of emotion or that they had reached a deeper transformative state in their understanding and cognition (Kratwohl, 2002; Simm & Marvell, 2015). Students experience emotions of place as well as emotional experiences of assessment. Formative and summative assessments are used to assist students to express and better understand their emotions. The two are not mutually exclusive as the assessments occur in situ; there is clearly an emotional experience preparing for and delivering the assessed presentation which may affect a students' sense of place.

As a form of formative intervention, a series of interviews took place immediately at the post-presentation phase to capture a range of emotions and to help students make sense of what they experienced. These interventions cannot be carried out during the activity as the students are engaged in leading group activities. However, there is scope for the students to incorporate a series of tasks designed to capture emotional responses during their activity. For example, the presenters may ask their fellow students to reflect on their feelings of being in a specific place at a moment in time. They may direct students to consider a given situation or scenario and elicit a verbal or written response.

Capturing emotion: post-presentation interviews

It was noted by the tutors that the students were at first apprehensive and nervous about delivering their presentations in situ (Marvell, 2008). A series of post-presentation interviews were conducted during two fieldtrips to Barcelona in 2013 to capture these emotions. The existing use of field notebooks and reflective essay did not reveal the extent of emotions as expressed by students. It was decided that previous written comments would be used as a benchmark to compare the post-presentation interviews. These were conducted by taking the groups aside to a quiet space immediately after the activity had been concluded and were recorded to preserve the discussion that followed. During one field course the interviews were videoed and during the other an audio recording was made. Although there were two methods of recording, both led to the production of a written transcript that was used as a basis for analysis in this study. It was important that the interviewer maintained objectivity as their own level of questioning and behaviour could have influenced the discussion. The interviewer was a member of academic staff, who clearly stated to the students that the comments made were for the purpose of research and did not form part of any assessment or judgment made by the group whilst being recorded. Written consent was obtained for participation in the study. A series of semi-structured questions were asked to facilitate comment and help reveal the underlying emotions as experienced by students undertaking a fieldwork activity (Adriansen & Madsen, 2014). Students were animated and talkative in which ordinary notetaking would not have kept up with the flow of comments. These discussions reveal an emotive state based on nerves, excitement and apprehension that is not reflected in the fieldwork notebooks and reflective essays as experienced during previous years. These comments appear to be more insightful and reveal a greater sense of process and performance. Students were nervous expressing a degree of anxiety and worry as they did not have total control over their environs and were unsure of the conditions that they would face:

Nervous ... we were worried because we came here once in the morning and the shutters were down with graffiti on them and we came back a second time and the shutters were up, so you couldn't see the graffiti on the shutters ... so we were a bit nervous coming in the middle of the time so whether it would be busy or not ... (#A 2013, post-presentation interview, female)

We were all quite nervous about it, because obviously, it is quite daunting the fact that we had such a long presentation, we have all of the factors we don't know what's going to happen when we are out there ... (#B 2013, post-presentation interview, female)

Some students openly discussed the presentations given by other groups and discussed the presentation amongst themselves and with others which made them anxious:

[It went] Really well ... wow ... no, for us it went really well ... I think at the beginning it was quite nerve wracking, in the sense that we had a presentation this morning ..., we have been speaking to the other group and talking about how the fact that the audience did not get involved as much as they wanted which made it difficult, whereas our presentation we found that we got them involved ... and gave us the answers we wanted ... (#B 2013, post-presentation interview, male)

Part of the concern about delivering the presentation was the responsibility for teaching their peers and whether the audience would be receptive:

And we are responsible for 20 people around Barcelona, that was quite scary ... It sounded more difficult than it would be, but like when, as we said when it started it flowed, it was easier than we anticipated ... (#B 2013, post-presentation interview, male)

I loved it ... I thought it was great ... felt it was successful ... everything we had hoped for with regards to audience participation on our part of the tour and interacting, people were so perceptive to everything, every question we asked we got an answer, the interaction was really, really good ... (#C 2013, post-presentation interview, female)

These quotes reveal a sense of “being in the moment”, a time immediately post-presentation and as such, deeper reflections on place and meaning are less important than an adrenalin-fuelled focus on delivering an assessed presentation in front of tutors and peers in an unfamiliar environment. The evidence suggests that the focus is on completing the activity and the reflection of “self” rather than place; being “goal oriented”, changes the behaviour and reflective focus of the individuals concerned (Hirsh, 2010). This begins to raise questions about the mode, timing and purpose of personal reflection. Personal reflection can enthuse students and provide a positive learning experience (Bryson, 1997), yet the inclusion of such practices contains a series of challenges that need to be overcome (Harrison, Short, & Roberts, 2003).

Students are not necessarily expecting their emotions to form part of the reflection and the basis from which personal engagement with place can be explored as part of academic assessment. Students benefit from being reflective and reflective practices are best taught early in the students’ academic course of study. Even then, students are not always confident expressing their innermost feelings and part of the process is to allow them to become more aware of their own feelings and confident about expressing emotion. Fieldwork can present a series of unexpected challenges and situations that stimulate a series of emotions that can reveal a greater understanding of place.

Fieldwork notebooks

Fieldwork notebooks contain a great deal of reflection on personal experiences and places (Simm & Marvell, 2015). Fieldwork notebook data is available for Barcelona for six field courses, 2009–2013. These reflections are typically from a more detached perspective revealing an insight into a range of experiences that demonstrate a degree of transformative learning. Some of the comments challenged the traditional delivery of material in a classroom on the basis that being in situ was a more emotional experience ranging from personal attachment, to a sense of awe and wonder, to those who expressed a degree of hyperbole:

Being let “loose” as it were, and being left to discover an area on our own without influence from tour guides or those in the know (lecturers) was to become a fantastic experience. It allowed us to effectively bond with what essentially to us became “our Gothic Quarter”, and left every single one of us with feelings of excitement and enthusiasm to showcase such a unique, enchanting and enthralling Barrio of Barcelona to the others on our trip. (#1 2010, fieldwork notebook, male)

Differing from my pre-conception was the ease at which our presentation and others went. I had visions of busy areas being too crowded to walk through and any busy periods of traffic to be hellish, as would be moving from place to place to see presentations, relying solely on public transport. This was obviously not the case ... (#2 2010, fieldwork notebook, male)

Every day I was subject to new ways of thinking, feeling and studying about topics I initially knew little about. I realised lived experiences are more powerful in promoting learning in comparison with desk-based research ... (#3 2011, fieldwork notebook, female)

In some instances, emotions were mentioned in the fieldwork notebooks but not fully reflected upon in terms of their significance in creating understanding and the extent to which emotions are

“tied into place” (Urry, 2005, p. 73). These quotes highlight the importance of an aesthetic connection between people and place but it is not always clear whether the teaching and learning strategy stimulates a desire to discover more about a place (Marvell & Simm, 2016) or more generally provides a structured framework in which to explore a sense of place:

I could feel the immediate change in atmosphere the moment we took a side alley off the Ramblas; less tourists and less noise. (#4 2013, fieldwork notebook, female)

I sensed hostility towards us ... windows were shut as we walked past (#5 2013, fieldwork notebook, male)

The look of the buildings gave me a feeling of astonishment ... I felt very privileged to be able to explore ... (#6 2011, fieldwork notebook, female)

I find the shift in architecture styles throughout the city really interesting and stimulates the senses. (#7 2010, fieldwork notebook, male)

... I loved the lush greenery and the parrots. I felt that this provided character to the place, which helped with its identity. (#8 2010, fieldwork notebook, female)

Although the last quote suggests that the “parrots” add a sense of “character to the place”, the birds are not indigenous to Barcelona and as such the idea of “identity” could be contested. Although the student acknowledges the presence of feeling and attempts to be reflective (Moon, 2006) there is a limited expression of emotion attached to this potentially engaging encounter.

The quotes contained in the fieldwork notebooks reveal a limited emotional response that may be due to the academic training that students receive that often negates the use of emotion in academic discourse. It may also be due to the challenge of expressing “something that is ineffable ... namely a sense of emotional involvement with people and places” (Bondi et al., 2005, p. 2). Indeed, students require clear instructions about the need to include emotions in their reflective notebooks as Kleinman and Copp (1993) suggest that when students are in the field they ignore the self as “once you are there you are part of it” (p. 58). Asking students to simply recall recent events and observations can “rob note writing of its psychological immediacy and emotional release” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 50). There are clearly positive and negative issues associated with conveying a sense of emotion and students may not be entirely comfortable about expressing innermost feelings and anxieties or may be unable to express or make sense of what they are feeling (Widdowfield, 2000).

Personal reflective essays

Personal reflective essay data is also available for Barcelona for four field courses, 2009–2012. The personal reflective essays are more formally expressed and are not usually written in the first person apart from a few personal anecdotes. As such the essays are more considered, refined with limited evidence of spontaneity which appear to sanitise the experience for the reader:

[during the activities there was] “... the presence of emotions, feelings and values.” (#9 2010, reflective essay, female)

... when participating in a field activity on a topic I was interested in I found myself becoming far more involved and emotionally attached than I would in a lecture. (#10 2011, reflective essay, female)

The overall dynamic of the group was great, we all knew what everyone was presenting and in a few instances were able to help each other out when they forgot their lines. (#11 2012, reflective essay, male)

There appears to be a significant use of the pedagogic literature within the essays. Students had been directed to a range of pedagogic material; the reflective essays demonstrate that students had read more widely and that by referring to a paper adds academic credence. Thus, students are treating pedagogic research papers in the same way as academic research papers. Some students extract specific quotes that summarise or label what they did, which shows that they are relating their experiences to the pedagogic research and trying to make sense of the situations, although with limited critique:

During the presentation there were walks ... which meant that the ... tour leaders could use "talking whilst walking" to harness place as an active trigger to prompt novel forms of knowledge production" (Anderson, 2004) and questions could be discussed on the short walks between the locations with one of the group members. (#12 2011, reflective essay, female)

The personal reflective essays allow greater emphasis on and depth of analysis of student's own performance. Occasionally some essays reflect soul-seeking based on own performance whereas some students expressed frustration with the process of group work and sought to direct blame elsewhere. This response may be typical of some students who tend to be more descriptive relating to the mechanics and logistics of group work or the presentation, with less consideration of wider contexts of place and pedagogy.

Some students appear reluctant to write anything that could be interpreted as being negative. Rather than focusing on depth of reflection, they may suggest that their activities were successfully delivered and relate more to a celebration of achievement rather than producing an emotive piece of writing or one in which defined success or the importance of co-production:

Our final activity was especially successful as it was based on a group discussion and allowed the audience to play an active role in our research. (#13 2011, reflective essay, female)

Occasionally students demonstrate a more relaxed writing style and have the confidence and self-assurance to write more informally and with more emotion. This is more akin to the comments contained within the fieldwork notebooks and at times as candid as the responses gained through a post-presentation interview. This may be an indication of maturity and confidence with regards to self-reflection but may also be viewed by the majority as a risk or deviation from a traditional academic style of writing. As such tutors have to be flexible and open-minded to encourage and reward variations in reflexive writing style and to take careful consideration when setting a task or question and aligning marking criteria (Moon, 2004, 2006):

I remember the Boqueria market as an assault on the senses, of smells, colour, taste and noise related to feelings of joy. In this place I felt open to everything around me compelled to understand, discuss and to learn what I was exploring in this foreign environment. (#14 2012, reflective essay, male)

There is evidence to suggest that some students focus on small details, for example the design and production of handouts, rather than acknowledging the bigger picture of being in situ and gaining a sense of place (Marvell, 2008). Students may seek comfort in something material when faced with uncertainty about what they will experience and in some instances, they demonstrate an

unwillingness to change what has already been prepared, even though they may have new insights being in situ. As such the process of delivering an activity becomes the main objective. The reflective essay provides an opportunity to assess their contribution but has typically less emotion than the post-presentation interviews:

The planning for a field presentation in my experience is difficult to prepare for as it is situated at a location which you have never visited before, so therefore your [sic] not quite sure what to expect. (#15 2011, reflective essay, male)

But we must not forget that for the students this is their world and their perception of it. It is important to them to get things right even though we may suggest that they use the opportunity to engage with a learning process that is not just informative but transformative (Johansson & Felten, 2014). Some students may express themselves based on what they think the tutor expects, conforming to the outcomes from the assessment criteria. The use of personal reflection and emotion may not be a comfortable experience for all as some students may prefer a more passive process, being taught and assessed on a diet of “pre-digested knowledge” (Entwistle, 2012, p. 4).

Acknowledging the role of emotion during fieldwork

This research has revealed how important it is to recognise how students learn during fieldwork so that learning and assessment is aligned to what students are actually experiencing and not what the tutor expects they should be. This may lead to a tutor-inspired interpretation of place rather than a personal reflective account by the student.

The tutor needs to consider their role in shaping the emotional context as they may warn students about certain areas that could be perceived as being threatening, dangerous or unsafe, or describe other areas that could be interpreted as being safe, friendly and welcoming (Simm & Marvell, 2015). It may also be possible for group of students or a tutor to select an area knowing that it would invoke an emotional response. In this case there is a moral dilemma whether the students or tutor should encourage an emotional response to provoke a candid discussion about place, or whether students should be prepared in advance, giving them the option not to participate in case the emotional experience causes discomfort, anxiety or distress? Emotions are created and experienced not just because of being in a place but as Buda, d’Hautesserre, and Johnston (2014) explains, “what is felt is both imagined and material, individual and collective” (p. 112) as the tutor and other students can influence the emotional state of others. Emotional responses may reaffirm existing associations that may preclude experiencing a place that are bound up in historical, social, political, cultural or religious events.

Feelings of insecurity, panic and being overwhelmed may not be expected in formal academic assessment and as such these feelings and emotions may be omitted through an expectation that they may be perceived as being incorrect, insignificant or immature. Golubchikov (2015) takes a more direct approach in referring to a “critical feel-trip” [sic] where experiential, affective and critical learning are applied in field-studies. As such feelings and emotions are recognised as being an essential component of experiencing and understanding place (Glass, 2015). Emotional geographies are transformative and can challenge as well as deepen a students’ own perspectives and perceptions (Simm & Marvell, 2015). The role of emotion should be recognised not only as an intrinsic part of experiencing place but also recognised as such during fieldwork assessments and activities.

There are key differences in the style and extent of emotional reflection based on the nature and type of data collection. The data collected suggests that an assessed fieldwork notebook and a

reflective essay receives a more formal approach where descriptions of emotion appear to become detached from the individual. An interview post-presentation provides a more candid and instantaneous response. Descriptions of emotion appear to be more personalised and focused on the student-led activity. Is one approach more valid than the other? Students appear to be using emotion in different ways, at different times for different purposes. How best to capture these different emotional “states” and assess the influence of “being” in the field upon affective learning (Holton, 2017; Simm & Marvell, 2015)?

During the field course a variety of assessment methods are deployed to capture a range of different emotional responses at a range of different times. Daily reflective questions can help to reveal the development of ideas and emotions, for example the initial experiences and how personal views and feelings have changed and the extent to which students have reacted and adapted to arising situations. As such it is necessary to align assessment criteria to best reflect personal emotion during the fieldtrip. The fieldtrip is a formative experience so the tutors must be careful with devising summative assessments, by acknowledging the cognitive and emotional development of the students. As a form of preparation should we expect students to read and cite pedagogic literature? It may help students make sense of what they are experiencing, but may lead to prescriptive or rehearsed answers: as tutors recommend that students read such articles, students may interpret this as the “correct” way to experience and understand a place.

A series of effective teaching and learning strategies can provide students with a range of methods to record emotion from video blogs (vlogs), reflective diaries and notebooks, personal journals, expressive drawings and other creative means. It is also suggested that group discussions should include a discussion based around sensory perception and body experience that assist in highlighting the importance of emotion rather than on the processes of data collection and the summation of results. There is often an over reliance on cognitive understanding rather than emotive experience (Cook et al., 2016). Tutors should consider realigning learning outcomes to reflect upon emotional geographies and to encourage students to use a multi-sensory approach. This is not just restricted to visual stimuli but also to include sound, smell, touch and taste (Phillips, 2015). The experiences that are conveyed through a range of emotions may lead to affective and transformational learning that in turn invites further investigation (Simm & Marvell, 2015).

The challenge to tutors is to develop an appropriate set of assessment criteria that reflects the inclusion of personal emotional experience and the extent to which students are aware of the sites and situations that they are experiencing. This may require further development in preparing students to be aware of their own emotions and have an ability to express them in relation to understanding their own sense of place. Some students will have developed a greater emotional intelligence than others, some students may have difficulty in expressing a range of emotions that they are experiencing and some students may be able to express emotion but not be able to apply these to explore or explain a deeper understanding. It is also necessary for students to express a degree of honesty as Hochschild (1983) identified that emotions and their display are subject to a series of rules as an individual can attempt to feel and display a set of emotions that are regarded as being appropriate to a given situation (Hagemann, 2015). Emotions are highly personalised but can also be subjective as well as socially and politically constructed. As such, emotions can be regarded as being “relational, they are found in between people and in between people and place” (Wright, 2012, p. 1116).

It is necessary to include opportunities to reflect upon experiences beyond the recognised fieldwork itinerary. What do students experience between fieldwork sites? What emotional geographies exist whilst in transit between sites and during “down-time”? These experiences may suggest that they

form a greater part of personal understanding about place and the development of emotional geographies as students should be encouraged to think about how their emotions shaped their sense of place. Good qualitative research should “acknowledge, expose and examine the researcher’s emotionality” (Pocock, 2015, p. 42).

Concluding remarks and future research

Places have the potential to evoke a range of emotional responses (cf. Simm & Marvell, 2015); understanding that places can generate emotional reactions is important in developing a sense of place and (in turn) an emotional attachment to place (Smith, Davidson, Cameron, & Bondi, 2009). There is a need to differentiate between personal emotions of place whilst being in situ and those prompted by the assessment activity, heightened by the pressure and intensity of preparing and delivering group talks. What remains a challenge is to capture the unfiltered emotions of students while simultaneously encouraging them to be aware of the emotions of others about a specific place. The filtering process of reflection as promoted by reflective essays can potentially offer a deeper insight but also has an ability to mask and distort as imagination and misunderstanding can also affect perception of place. “It is important that students are encouraged to reflect upon their emotions, which may change over time” (Marvell & Simm, 2016, p. 127) and be aware of the factors that are initiating such a change. The co-constitution of awareness of place and the individual has consequences for our relationship with the notion of place but also “with our selves, others and our wider socio-natural environment” (Bartos, 2013, p. 89).

This paper has highlighted that emotional geographies are a key feature of fieldwork yet are often understated and affect students’ experiences of place. Reflective diaries and reflective essays do not always capture the range of emotional experiences and that in this case an interview in situ may present a more candid emotional reaction. Both non-representational theory and psychogeography demonstrate that emotions play a critical role in creating a sense of place as well as creating a sense of place and as such should play a key part in reflective practice. Place can be regarded as the backdrop or emotional trigger which evolves with time as the student (re-)visits and engages with the site and takes others to explore and experience that place. During this time there is a shift from spontaneous discovery (when they first arrive at the site) to guided experience during the student-led presentation. This paper also demonstrates how formative and summative reflective assessments can facilitate awareness and better understanding of place, and the student’s relationship to that place. Traditional forms of assessment have focused on knowledge and processes of place-making rather than on a series of dynamic feelings, emotions and interactions. Should we therefore be more aware of a range of emotions and how this affects perception and experience? Such an activity may be challenging for people who lack emotional recognition and understanding of emotions and who may experience a very different sense of place. Diverse cultural backgrounds, age, gender, level of education and life experiences are also contributing factors that may affect an emotional response. This should not impede the use of emotion in understanding the relationship between people and place. The overall challenge is to acknowledge and articulate the importance of emotion in the experiences of staff and students during fieldwork through a range of reflective activities and assessment.

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