

**Sense of Place, Identity
and Attachment:
*Entering University***

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ABSTRACT

Sense of Place is a topic that has attracted considerable interest of late; how people relate to their location and how this bond can increase or decrease can have considerable bearing on levels of well-being and adjustment. Place attachment can also be strengthened through social interplay and through people becoming active members of a community such as a university. This study looks at the level of connection to place experienced by university students embarking on the first year of their degree programme. Using established survey instruments, students were questioned at the start of their course and again three months later to determine whether levels of place attachment, place meaning, place identity and social capital would increase over this period. Interviews with students examined their relationship to place and their perceptions of the university campus. Results show that place attachment did increase significantly pre- and post-test, but place meaning did not show any statistically significant change. There was some evidence to suggest that there is a weak link between social capital levels pre- and post-test. A key finding of the study was the importance of national identity, specifically a connection to Wales, and the high rating given to the importance of family bonds. Fundamentally, this research is useful as it may be able to inform policy and practice in the context of higher education, particularly in regard to the issue of retention; i.e. whether students remain in the institution of their choice and complete their chosen academic programme.

ACRONYMS

T1	Time 1
T2	Time 2
HE	Higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
IDCI	Identity Diversity and Citizenship in Ireland
ISSP	International Social Survey Project
UoW:TSD	University of Wales Trinity Saint David

1. INTRODUCTION

*Sweetest sings the bird
where it was hatched
Gaelic proverb*

The world is changing at an ever-increasing speed and conceptions of what is meant by a ‘sense of place’ have undergone extensive revisions as connections to territory become more fragmented. There is greater emphasis on the global, yet never has the local been so important. Massey’s (1993) ‘global sense of local’ reflects the idea that the notion of a sense of place can be extended to encompass all the other places that contribute to understanding a particular area. A connection to ‘place’ is an affirmation of self, yet people are struggling to find their identity in an increasingly homogenised environment and are becoming dislocated from their heritage and origins. We are often defined by place. Indeed, one of the things people first ask each other is, ‘Where are you from?’ It has been suggested that we are ‘hard-wired’ to identify with places, and that this connection, or disconnection, is something we all experience. As Gardener (1999, pg. 40) suggests, naturalistic intelligence is firmly established in evolutionary history as a means of ensuring survival of the species. Creswell (2004, pg. 11) stresses that place should be viewed as not just a thing in the world but a way of understanding the world. However, place need not be a physical entity; it is possible to feel a connection with communities linked only by the power of social networking.

The importance of place and the connections that develop through personal attachment are explored through the literature review which highlights the work of the key theorists in the field, paying particular attention to psychological, philosophical and biological standpoints. Belonging to a group linked to place can be regarded as a basic human requirement and a sense of community is important for people’s well-being. **To explore these concepts this**

research will consider the experiences of students entering higher education (HE) who may be struggling with the demands of a new environment. Categorisation with place is a form of social labelling (Inglis, 2009) and also about a sense of bonding and belonging and feeling at home with others, what Bourdieu (1977) has referred to as habitus. The concept of social capital, the networks of support that people create, is also reflected in these constructions. Place is central to our existence; people think in metaphors drawn from place. George Eliot (1866 *cited in* Macfarlane 2012, pg. 26) suggested that landscape ‘can enlarge the imagined range for self to move in’, and Macfarlane (2012, pg. 27) considers, intriguingly, that there are two questions to ask of any landscape, ‘what do I know when I am in this place that I can know nowhere else? And, what does this place know of me that I cannot know of myself?’ Creswell (2004, pg. 10), however, makes a distinction between place and landscape. In his view, landscape is primarily a visual idea, with the viewer outside, whereas places are very much things to be inside. Perceptions of place can be defined by processes of representation as encapsulated in maps which Austin (2013a) has described as ‘a primary tool of governance’. These representations of place and landscape can take many forms. For example, modern road maps, suggests Macfarlane (2007, pg. 11), speak of transit and displacement and minimise the impact of natural features. Macfarlane (2012, pg. 26) expands on these ideas, suggesting that we understand ourselves by using landscape and carry within us maps which we use to navigate ‘interior terrains’.

However, place is not necessarily a positive force. For many, place can be restrictive and oppressive; a prison rather than a life-affirming attribute. Students entering HE who are unable to develop strong attachments with their university may be at risk of withdrawing from the process. Place can also be used to categorise and discriminate; social representations such as ‘out of place’ stigmatise refugees, the homeless and any who do not conform to social

norms. For those with a diminished sense of place, rootlessness and isolation can be inhibiting factors. Therefore, it is suggested that a sense of place is often an important component in people's need to reinforce their identity and validate their sense of self-worth, and this study will attempt to show the importance of place through a mix of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, highlighting the connection with the past. As Lowenthal says (1985, pg. 41) the past is integral to our sense of identity. Many people keep in touch with their past selves through an attachment to long-inhabited locales. 'A place in this sense cannot be bought, it must be shaped, usually over long periods of time, and then it must be preserved' (Heckscher 1965, *cited in* Lowenthal, 1985, pg. 42). Bourdieu (1977, pg. 79) suggests that it is 'yesterday's man' who comprises the most important part of our nature, as the present is very small part of our make-up when compared to the long past from which we spring.

However, Robinson (2008, pg. xi) considers that geological timescales 'make a nonsense of most human behaviour' and he regards as 'lunacy' the idea that people can belong to a particular piece of land or that the land can belong to someone. Put in the context of deep time, 'the geographies over which we are so suicidally passionate are...fleeting expressions of the earth's face'. Nevertheless this long view, or philosophical stance, is clearly not shared by a large proportion of the human race, and it is asserted that for many people identification with place is a key component in their psychological make-up, whether for good or bad.

This study surveyed a cohort of students entering the University of Wales Trinity Saint David for the first time. The hypotheses and research questions are drawn from the literature review and allow an exploration of the complexity of a sense of place, attachment and symbolic meaning and social capital. The hypotheses are:

- *Place attachment and place meaning would increase over the period of time students spent on campus.*
- *Social capital levels would be enhanced over the same period as sense of place develops.*

The research questions asked of the data were:

- *How does place attachment and place meaning increase over the period of time students spent on campus?*
- *Does the development of a sense of place increase affective bonds?*
- *Does place contribute to a sense of identity?*
- *Does social capital develop alongside a sense of place?*

This survey presents an unrivalled opportunity to study a community in the making. It is suggested that place attachment, place meaning and social capital strength would increase over the period of the survey as the community developed and affective bonds were forged with place and people. Interviews with students would also enhance the findings. The data will be collected using established five-point Likert surveys and other questionnaires, adapted to suit the particular requirements of the research project, and the results will be analysed using paired T-tests, correlation, analysis of variance and descriptive analysis. The results will be discussed in the final section.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Questions of what exactly constitutes place are wide-ranging. It could be an area of land defined by boundaries, or it could be a product of human endeavour; a city fashioned by generations of people, or farmland managed for human benefit. It could also be a social construct that only takes form in the minds of its proponents, or a simple intersection of a myriad of lives and experiences. Indeed, it could be something that exists only in the reified atmosphere of cyberspace – a network of ‘friends’ linked only by access to computers, but nevertheless a valid construct in their imagination.

It is suggested that a concept of place cannot be defined by one all-embracing set of criteria, but is a mixture of a complicated network of interactions, with elements of fixity, but also elements of a social constructionist approach in which place is created by the perceptions of a network of people, such as groups of students entering university for whom social interaction may be a crucial component in determining their attachment to place.

2.2. Historical Overview of Sense of Place

From earliest times, place has been central to human existence; survival hinged on an accurate analysis of the attributes of a particular place. Does it have water? What animals live there? Is there shelter? Get it wrong and extinction loomed. Therefore it would not be fanciful to suggest the development of humankind is inextricably interwoven with place. Indeed, Casey (2001, pg. 687, 690) considers that the term habitation suggests an active commitment to place and that landscape and body are the core of a geographical self. Without landscape, the body would be restricted to one place, but without a body places would simply pass us by. Linked together, place and self are enriched and sustained. Bourdieu (1977, pg. 80) describes

his concept of habitus as the routines and practices that link nature and culture, consciousness and body and self and other. He notes that one of its basic effects is the creation of a common-sense world with an objectivity which stems from the harmonisation of people's experiences, reinforced by similar or identical experiences. Creswell (1996, *cited in* Hubbard and Kitchin (2011, pg. 79) argues that place, territory and landscape are the elements of social life because they connect the body to place through habitus. To paraphrase Descartes (1637), 'I am in place, therefore I am'. However, this implies that places only exist as a social construction, imagined and sustained by human agency, a concept first proposed by sociologists Berger and Luckmann (1966, *cited in* Gregory *et al*, 2009) who suggest that people establish truths and meanings through habits and institutions. Yet, philosophically, one can envisage place as a concept independent of human activity. The construction of place by other life could form a valid existential concept. At a material level, place clearly exists in a way that intellectual conceptions do not. Some would suggest that our reaction to place is based on its physical attributes whilst at other times there may be a more subtle response operating. Again aesthetic appreciation of place and landscape may be considered as something that only higher life forms such as humans enjoy.

Certainly, the perceived relationship between place and self has undertaken considerable modification since the views of Locke (1690, *cited in* Casey, 2001, pg. 684) who saw a clear distinction between personal identity and place, but contemporary views contest the dichotomies that separate self and body. Casey (2001) suggests that there is no place without self and no self without place. Creswell (2004, pg. 15) considers that the word 'place' conceals many differences, as it stands not only for an object but also a way of looking at the world. Looking at place from an ontological perspective defines what exists, but taking an epistemological stance means regarding place as a way of seeing and knowing the world in a

particular way. Humans construct the meaning of place and also the material form of places, in addition Malpas (1999, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 32) argues that humans cannot build anything without first of all being in place. Extending this idea, Creswell (2004, pg. 33) suggests that there was no 'place' before humanity existed, but once we came into existence, then so did place. This suggestion appears to negate the presence of the manifold species on the planet, and invites us to consider the Buddhist philosophical question

*If a tree falls in a forest and there is no-one there to hear it,
then is there a sound?*

Ideas of place have developed considerably from the regional geography which held sway in the early 20th century using the concept of 'chorology', the study of places based on descriptions of the physical make-up of an area and the boundaries that define them (Creswell, 2004, pg. 16). Chorology is based on the work of the First Century Greek geographer Strabo who described it as parts of the earth, but even at this earliest stage of geography as a subject Strabo (1, *cited in* Casey, 2001, pg. 683) considered that philosophy had an integral part to play in its understanding.

Sense of place developed out of the work of the humanistic geographer Tuan (1974, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 20) who argued that it is through human perception and experience that we improve our awareness of the world. He defines place through comparing it with space: space is movement, while place is concerned with stopping and becoming involved. He coined the term topophilia to describe the 'affective bond between people and place' in which place is regarded as a 'field of care'. This idea of attachment broadens the concept of place to encompass a wide range of situations and permits of the consideration of value and belonging, because place is a product of a 'pause' and the possibility of attachment, it can exist at many levels; 'at one extreme a favourite armchair is a place, at the other extreme the

whole earth' (Tuan 1977, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 20). Although his ground-breaking work is rightly cited as one of the cornerstones of sense of place theorising, it could be argued that he is simply formalising, in a geographic sense, the ideas of place affection and identity which have permeated literature for hundreds of years, as illustrated by the affective bond with landscape to which poets such as Wordsworth have given voice.

2.3. The Influence of Phenomenology

Tuan's ideas were further developed by Relph (1977, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pgs. 22-23) who used the phenomenological idea of intentionality to suggest the essence of place 'lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines place as profound centers of human existence'. Phenomenologists argue that we cannot be conscious without being conscious of something, which creates a relationship between self and world (Creswell, 2004, pg. 22). Relph (1976, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 23) argues that consciousness is not just of something but relates to place, and the only way people can be human is to be 'in place'. He further suggests that 'insiderness' is the core value that defines a sense of place, if people are inside a place they feel safe rather than threatened (Relph, 1976, *cited in* Seamon and Sowers, 2008, pg. 45). For people cut off from or alienated from place, he devised the term 'outsiderness', which could be applied, for instance, to people experiencing homesickness. Relph (1976, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 44) was concerned with authenticity which he saw as a genuine and sincere attitude. In his view, the development of placelessness prevented people from becoming 'existential insiders'. An inability to have an authentic relationship with place leads to 'existential outsiderness', the most extreme form of alienation from place. For students entering university these are issues that need to be resolved. As already outlined, the importance of students establishing a strong connection to place may have implications

for HE retention figures as the alienation from place outlined by Relph (1976) could impair engagement.

Seamon and Sowers (2008, pg. 45) suggest that the important phenomenological point is that insiderness and outsiderness are a basic human life dialectic, and different combinations produce a range of place experiences. The phenomenological viewpoint was further expanded by Seamon (1980, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 33) whose aim was to discover the experiential character of place through movement. He coined the phrase 'place-ballet' to describe the complex routines that humans follow in their daily lives, contributing to a sense of place. Tuan and Relph (*cited in* Creswell 2004, p74) were adamant that when processes of movement were extended too far then this was antithetical to the construction of places. Relph's conclusions were an elaboration of the philosophy of Heidegger (1971), particularly the concept of 'desien' (dwelling) which he explained through the romanticised description of a Black Forest farmhouse which provided a cosy home for a family (Creswell, 2004, pg. 22) . This viewpoint reflects Seamon's suggestion (1979, *cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 24) that home is a place to rest and withdraw from the world. For Heidegger, an authentic existence was one anchored in place, but Relph attempted to move beyond such simplistic ideas, quoting the philosopher Langer (1953, *cited in* Relph, 1976, pg. 29) who considered that place need not have any fixed location, so that a ship or circus camp, constantly changing location, were still, culturally, a place. Ultimately, of course, place could simply be a cyber-creation, a network of people linked only by a social networking site on the Internet.

Relph's work has been criticised for what is seen by some as a misrepresentation of the place experience and a view of the human condition that ignores variations in social and individual circumstances and presupposes a core human experience in which all non-essentials have

been stripped away (Seamon and Sowers, 2008, pg. 47). However, they consider that this criticism misunderstands the phenomenological standpoint that there are differences in people's experiences and they all have to be incorporated into understanding human idiosyncrasies (Seamon and Sowers, 2008, pg. 48). Relph himself acknowledges that a major weakness of his original theories is that they presented ideas in terms of dialectical opposites, but, nevertheless, Seamon and Sowers (2008, pg. 48) consider the flexibility and breadth of Relph's original conceptual ideas allow for variations in how each individual experiences place and how place can be experienced differently at different times.

Another criticism has been that Relph advocates home and stability over the fluidity of modern life with its increased opportunities for changing location, but Seamon and Sowers (2008, pg. 49) again consider that the dialectics of centre/horizon and place/placelessness emphasise the strength of the conceptual relationships that underline the phenomenological approach. Relph (1996) has suggested that his theories are sometimes seen as a nostalgic evocation of a more settled age, however, Seamon and Sowers (2008, pg. 49) consider that whatever situation we may find ourselves in, people will always need place because that is an essential definition of who we are. They go as far as to suggest that the weakening of insiderness and the strength of place may provide an explanation for the 'erosion of civility in the West and elsewhere'. Nevertheless, it could be argued that Seamon and Sowers' view of the human psyche is predicated too much on location and ignores the facility that people have to accommodate a wide variety of situations which they can adapt to create an acceptable environment, which may not be conventionally place-bound. For students entering HE, the bonds they form with fellow students may be more important than the place itself, an important factor to consider when examining how well they adapt to their new setting and remain on their course.

2.4. Place Attachment and Place Meaning

Relph's (1976, *cited in* Kudryavtsev *et al*, 2012, pg. 2) other major contribution to the concept of sense of place is his identification of the aspects of place attachment and place meaning. According to him, place attachment represents ties between people and places, while place meaning is the symbolic association that people ascribe to places which defines individual and cultural identity. Kudryavtsev *et al* (2011, pg. 230) suggest that employing a psychological approach to a sense of place means considering it as a combination of place attachment and place meaning.

Kyle and Chick (2007, pg. 214) agree that places are symbolic contexts imbued with meaning which emerge through interaction with other people and the environment. People acquire socially constructed identities that are an indicator of their individuality through affiliation to place; for students arriving at university, this creation of identity is of particular relevance as they are in a unique position of forming a new community in which the environment on campus may have a particular resonance in terms of the success or otherwise of their new academic life. Social engagement also creates a sense of belonging and provides support through interaction with friends and peers (Thomas, 2012, pg. 14). Relph (1976, *cited in* Kudryavtsev *et al*, 2011, pg 233) feels that place rootedness leads to a sense of care and concern. Similarly, it has been shown that place meaning motivates people to protect places. Henwood and Pidgeon (2001, *cited in* Kudryavtsev *et al*, 2011, pg. 234) examined rural Welsh communities concerned about potential urban developments that could threaten woodland. The forests and trees carried symbolic meanings that contributed to place identity in these communities.

The concept of place attachment has been further developed by Low and Altman (1992, *cited in* Kyle and Chick, 2007, pg. 210) with reference to the phenomenon of human-place bonding. While stressing that affect, emotion and feeling are core components of the concept, they are often accompanied by cognition and action and behaviour. The subjective nature of the sense of place construct has been emphasised by those employing a naturalistic paradigm, and strong emotional ties are often the result of repeated place interactions and produce what Tuan (1980, *cited in* Kyle and Chick, 2007, pg. 211) refers to as ‘the steady accretion of sentiment’. However, Tuan (1977, *cited in* Kudryavtsev, 2012, pg. 10) also considers that place attachment develops through frequent or long experience of place. Place attachment can be further divided into place dependence and place identity: place dependence is the potential of a place to satisfy people’s need by providing a milieu for their chosen activities, while place identity is the extent to which a place contributes to the definition of self or becomes part of a personal identity (Kudryavtsev *et al*, 2011, pg. 231). Place attachment can also be strengthened through social interplay and through people becoming active members of a community (Kudryavtsev *et al*, 2012, pg. 3). The development of attachment provides an opportunity for students to engage with university and the importance of dependence and identity has clear links to the work of Tuan and Relph.

2.5. Global Sense of Local

Tuan and Relph’s views that a connection to place is rooted in ‘insiderness’ and movement of populations when extended too far inhibits the construction of places is challenged by Massey who argues for a ‘global sense of local’. In her view, globalisation and the flow of people across the planet, has ushered in a new era of what Marx called ‘the annihilation of space by time’ resulting in the phenomenon of ‘time-space compression’. This theory was proposed by Harvey (1996) who devised the term to suggest the increasing homogenisation

and globalisation of the world. Massey (1993, pg. 8) argues that place can be seen not as an object but as a process. Places do not need to be defined by boundaries and do not need single 'unique' identities but she stresses that she is not trying to deny the specificity of place, but suggesting that each place is the focus of a mixture of social relations linked with the accumulation of place history. The character of a sense of place can only be truly understood when it is linked to places beyond the immediate site. 'A progressive sense of place would recognise that, without being threatened by it. What we need, it seems to me, is a global sense of local, a global sense of place' (Massey, 1993, pg. 9). Gregory *et al* (2009, pg. 676) suggest that what Massey is doing is rejecting a contrived nostalgia for singular places and instead proposing a dynamic aspect of place which makes connections in a globalised environment.

For Urry (1994, *cited in* Hubbard and Kitchin, 2011, pg. 436) modernity is completely mobile. 'Modern society is a society on the move'. This resonates with the experience of the geographically mobile student, free to explore new territories. Entering adulthood and away from home, perhaps for the first time, many students may regard their social interactions with peers and staff as more important than the place itself. Goodenow (1993, *cited in* Thomas, 2012, pg. 13) notes that a sense of belonging in educational environments involves support and respect for the student as an individual. However, Inglis (2009, pg. 1) suggests there is evidence that identification with place remains a powerful driver for people. Indeed, an increased attachment to 'different' local sites is a reaction to the conformity of globalisation (Flusty 2004, *cited in* Inglis, 2009, pg. 1). Hutton (2013) argues that the more universal we get, then the more important the local becomes. It has been suggested that human experience of big cities is confined on a personal level to just a few streets (home and work, possibly)

and this validates the assertions that there is an increasing need to identify with the local in a homogenised, fast-moving society.

2.6. Biological and Environmental Perspectives

Sense of place can also have a biological and environmental perspective. Some theorists (Wilson 1984, Kaplan 2005, and Bird 2007) have suggested that humans are ‘hard-wired’ to appreciate certain aspects of the natural environment, thereby predisposing us to develop place attachments. Kaplan (2005, pg. 174) reported on the restorative effects of the natural environment, suggesting that exposure to natural features such as mountains, forests and meadows contributes to a recovery from stress and fatigue. The theory of biophilia, developed by Wilson, suggests that human beings are programmed for a connection with nature. Wilson notes the findings of Orians, Tuan and Dubos (1984, pg. 110) who suggest that people attempt to recreate savannah-like environments in places like shopping malls and formal gardens. Preliminary results from a 2013 study into brain activity suggests that humans are predisposed to feel at peace in the countryside and confused in urban areas (Johnston, 2013). Researchers at Exeter University found that a part of the brain connected with a calm, meditative state was activated when people were shown images of rural scenes, but pictures of an urban environment caused a delayed reaction as the part of the brain dealing with visual complexity tried to work out what was happening. Yet, paradoxically, it is almost impossible to decide what is natural, at any point in the earth’s history, ‘natural’ features are evolving, degrading and transmuting into different forms, so that the human programming for a reaction to ‘natural’ features may be an innate response to idealised features constructed in the mind, rather than a genuine response to actual topography.

2.7. Social Capital

A key feature in developing a sense of community which contributes to fostering a strong sense of place is the strength of social capital in groups, or in other words, the importance of networking in communities and the value people accrue from this. Bradley *et al* (2009, pg. 49) suggest that society can gain greatly from communities with increased social capital and that beneficial outcomes can stem from people who have a strong sense of place. They say that most research shows that social capital and sense of place tend to strengthen each other and that this can lead to wider benefits. One of the key theorists on social capital is Putnam (2000, pg. 23) who suggests that the concept can be divided into two distinct modes: bridging capital, which encourages upward mobility and advancement, and bonding capital which encourages support within a group, but can be restrictive through the exclusivity of its operation. Both types can have positive social effects and can complement each other, rather than being an 'either/or' situation. Putnam (2000, pg. 135) notes that an important element of social capital is the principle of generalised reciprocity, doing a favour for someone with the assumption that it will be returned later, for example, in a community keen to help each other out. Some favours can be returned quickly, but others may take a lot longer. Putnam feels that it can be difficult to distinguish this principle from altruism, but it is also hard to categorise as self-interest. Tocqueville (*cited in* Putnam, 2000, pg. 135) has described this as 'self-interest rightly understood'. Fukuyama (1999, *cited in* Phillips, 2003, pg. 5) considers that social capital operates as a type of trust between community members with 'a set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits co-operation between them'; for university students, the establishment of links through the exercise of social capital is a positive way to develop in their new community. Bourdieu's (1977) theory of social capital – the way people communicate through learnt social interactions – also has a bearing on how students develop and succeed in their chosen institution. Students establishing themselves in

new situations can draw on their 'capital' strengths which may ensure they complete their course.

2.8. Identity, Place and Social Representations Theory

Inglis (2009, pg. 3) considers that following Durkheim's (1976) theories, it is possible to say that identity with place involves processes of social labelling and identification which classify people as belonging to different countries, cities, towns and villages. However, Inglis (2009, pg. 4) notes that as well as being a social label and cultural indicator, place can be about a sense of belonging and bonding, sharing with others a similar world-view, a concept encapsulated in Bourdieu's (1977) notion of habitus. Inglis (2009) has noted that understanding identity can be difficult. People can seem rooted to certain types of identity but can then move quickly between them. 'Identities are a form of cultural tool kit that people use to construct an image and understanding of themselves.'

However, place can also be used to control and divide populations. Creswell (2004, pg. 102) suggests place is often linked to many commonplace phrases such as 'knowing your place', 'putting someone in their place' and being 'in place' and 'out of place'. Transgressions can be seen as a spatial concept, people who have 'crossed the line' in both a geographical and socio-cultural way. The global flows of people alluded to by Massey are under attack from those who advocate a view that Malkki (*cited in* Creswell, 2004, pg. 121) terms 'sedentarist'. This favours roots, place and fixity over mobility and fluidity. The establishment of place inevitably involves the corollary of what lies outside. What is outside is important in defining what is inside (Creswell, 2004, pg. 102). This suggests that Relph's concepts of 'insideness' and 'outsideness' are being manipulated in an exclusionary way. Creswell (2004, pg. 103) suggests that a useful way to describe things in the wrong place would be 'anachorism'.

These ‘out-of-place’ metaphors are powerful instruments of control and can be further examined through the application of Moscovici’s theory of Social Representations which transforms complex ideas into easily understood and accessible words and phrases. Moscovici’s theory employs several processes – one is figuration where an abstract idea is represented by a metaphorical image; and the other is anchoring, where unfamiliar objects are identified and classified by a comparison with more familiar categories (Moscovici 1984, *cited in* Augoustinos *et al*, 2006, pgs. 39 and 40). Howarth (2011, pgs. 10 and 11) suggests that in the process of anchoring the unfamiliar in the familiar, representations are modified. Objectification is more active than anchoring because it saturates the idea of unfamiliarity with reality, turning it into the very essence of reality. In this way, images stop being images and become part of reality. This, it is suggested, can allow the manipulation of representations related to place. Poets such as Henry Newbolt used the metaphorical image of the sports played in pre-First World War public schools to link with the concept of battle (Simkin, 2013). The playing fields (place) are transformed by social representations to depict the battlefields of France – a revisionary use of metaphor which appears to minimise the brutal reality of warfare and present it as a sort of game, which undoubtedly would have convinced impressionable youngsters and a gullible public to support the war effort. However, it is suggested that common words or phrases used as social representations to identify place meaning can also have positive connotations. Images created by words such as ancient, scenic, beautiful, unique and remote anchor the representation of place as a positive attribute. Perceptions of a university may well be affected by the ‘greenness’ of the campus and the design of the buildings.

2.9. Higher Education, Recruitment and Retention

It is suggested that a sense of place contributes greatly to levels of satisfaction and well-being and this is reflected in the experience of students entering university and whether or not they complete their course in the same institution they enrolled in. Levels of retention are of considerable concern to universities and between 2008 and 2011, the Higher Education Academy invested £1 million in a programme to identify and evaluate effective ways of improving student retention and success (HEA, 2014). The Academy's 2012 report found that a significant minority of students consider withdrawing from study, with one of the primary reasons being a feeling of **isolation and not fitting in, or 'outsideness' and 'insideness'** (Thomas, 2012, pg. 12; Relph, 1976). The report notes that belonging has emerged as a major idea in the research programme. At an individual level, belonging acknowledges a student's subjective feelings of connection to their chosen institution. This links directly to Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus, outlined earlier, which is the routines and practices that link body and self. Universities have an identifiable habitus which may be at odds with the student habitus, leading to feelings of dislocation and being undervalued (Thomas, 2012, pg. 13).

An earlier HEA report (2011) highlighted case studies aimed at improving student retention and success in Wales. Thomas and May (2011, pg. 14) note that friendship and peer support are crucial factors for students when deciding whether to remain in HE. Students are more likely to turn to friends and family for help than academic and support staff (2011, pg. 15). This suggests that networks of peers, or social capital, may be of more importance than the specificity of place (Putnam, 2000). However, of particular interest to this survey is the section that looks at the development of the Cwad meeting area on the Carmarthen campus of UoW:TSD, which was created out of a library to provide an interactive flexible learning space that 'would motivate and support the university community in an inclusive and creative

manner' (Wilkinson, 2011, pg. 49). Since opening, the students have engaged with the space in unforeseen ways, rearranging the area to host student-sponsored events. Wilkinson (2011, pg. 50) notes that the space encourages student and staff interaction and its success can be measured by the 'buzz' emanating from the site. (See Appendix 7.3, campus observations). It is clear from this experiment that the relationship to place fostered by this innovative scheme contributes to students' degree of attachment to the campus and could have a positive impact on levels of retention (Relph, 1976).

Further support for the theory that the physical space of campus contributes to student satisfaction comes from the work of Astin (1999, pg. 518) who has examined student involvement, which he considers refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy a student devotes to the academic experience. An involved student would typically spend a great deal of time on campus, interact positively with academic staff and peers and take part in college activities (Tuan, 1974). It is considered that the effect of place have positive effects on outcomes, specifically that students staying on campus develop more inter-personal self-esteem, have a more liberal attitude and are more hedonistic (Astin, 1999, pg. 524; Tuan, 1974; Relph, 1976). Living on campus considerably increases the chance of a student completing their degree course and boosts their social interactions and their relationship with academic staff. They are also more likely to be satisfied with their undergraduate experience as a whole. Further research from Astin (1999, pg. 525) has shown that interaction with academic staff is more strongly related to college satisfaction than any other type of involvement, a conclusion at odds with the HEA findings. It is clear that social relations and the importance of place have a great bearing on student satisfaction and will impact on retention.

2.10. Conclusion

It is clear from this brief review, that what appears to be a straightforward concept – that of a sense of place – is far from simple and can vary depending on the epistemological and ontological standpoints adopted; from Tuan's and Relph's theories grounded in location and belonging, to the more abstract notions of Massey and Harvey, who see place in more metaphysical terms. Perhaps Tuan's and Relph's views, which are based on a physical appreciation of the fixity of place, do not chime with a modern, globalised perspective, which sees place as a constantly changing amalgam of connections. Austin (2013b) considers that the human experience of place is emotional and metaphysical. Landscape, he says, is inhabited by our meanings, so we are products of our personal and cultural memory. This seems to be the key point – place is a social construct which reflects the personal and individual. Although there may be many common linkages when evaluating relationship to place, ultimately a person's responses are uniquely individual. For the HE students surveyed in this study, this is an important factor to be taken into account, as will be explored through the interview responses in particular. The experience of students entering HE is clearly shaped by personal interaction, but the effect of place should not be under-estimated – the configuration of space can be a key element in levels of satisfaction and well-being in college environments (Wilkinson, 2011, pg. 51).

3. METHODOLOGY REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

This study aims to explore students' identity and their sense of place through their level of place attachment and place meaning, and their social capital strength. The data will be collected through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods with the aim of providing a broad understanding, allowing for a statistical interpretation of the responses, coupled with a more subjective approach, reflected in the qualitative approach of interview. The varied qualitative methods which will be used coupled with the qualitative approach will allow for the application of triangulation, which will enable the findings to be cross-checked. Laws (2003 *cited in* Bell, 2005, pg. 116) notes that the key to triangulation is to observe the same item from different perspectives and therefore be in a position to query or confirm the conclusions of one method with those of another.

Two groups on the Carmarthen campus of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David have been identified: a BA Primary Education Studies and the BA Social Inclusion course. Any themes that emerge from the data will be explored through either a positivist, scientific approach (quantitative) or through a constructivist or naturalistic paradigm (qualitative). A further terminological divide can be explored through the use of the terms normative (quantitative) and interpretive (qualitative). Douglas (1973, *cited in* Cohen *et al*, 2007, pg. 21) suggests that normative approaches consider that human behaviour is governed by rules and investigated by natural science, while interpretive approaches are concerned with the importance of the individual.

3.2. Justification for Methodology

It is considered that employing a quantitative approach allows for an accurate measure of students' place attachment, place meaning and social capital strength through the use of a questionnaire. Quantitative research can be viewed as deductive, i.e. driven by theory. Popper (1959 *cited in* Potter, 2006, pg. 83) suggests that this approach means testing a theory's predictions in a manner which will allow it to be disproved. In general, this sort of research aims to discover how natural laws operate by producing theories and testing hypotheses, but these laws cannot be established unequivocally, all that is possible is for false theories to be rejected with the aim of moving closer to the truth. However, there is no way of knowing when a true theory has been found, so that even theories which have been tested have to be regarded as provisional. Positivism suggests that all genuine knowledge is based on experience of the senses and can be advanced only by experiment and observation (Cohen *et al*, 2007, pg. 9). They note that positivism provides the clearest possible ideal of knowledge but is not so effective when used to examine human behaviour. Positivism has been criticised for creating a mechanistic and reductionist view of nature which only defines life experiences in measurable terms rather than focusing on experience and the chance to make choices and be morally accountable (Cohen *et al*, 2007, pg. 17). Bearing this in mind, it is considered that to focus solely on 'scientific' quantitative results would be to ignore the rich vein of narrative that can be explored by looking at the lived experience of place.

While quantitative methods can reveal a great deal about identity and place, Inglis (2009) considers that they do not provide a 'thick' description of the importance of place to people. Conceptions of place are not revealed and also how people understand place and how it connects with their general habitus. As Kaplan (1964 *cited in* Greig *et al*, 2007, pg. 135) says, 'If you can measure something, that ain't it.' However, the subjective nature of qualitative

study lays it open to the criticism of being 'blind to the facts' and it is also noted that word 'fact' needs reconsideration (Hughes 1991, *cited in* Thody, 2006, pg. 130). In qualitative data a 'fact' is one voice, joined with others to produce a bigger picture. 'Facts' indicate the truth as envisaged by the respondent, source or researcher.

3.3. Quantitative Methods

The quantitative method which will be employed involves a pre-test/intervention/post-test approach using five-point Likert scales and other variables. The intervention will be the length of time students have spent on campus from pre- to post-test. Students on the two first-year programmes at the UoW:TSD Carmarthen campus will be asked to complete the questionnaire (Appendix, 7.1) in October, 2013 (Time 1). The same questionnaire will then be completed a second time in January 2014 (Time 2) and the results will be compared using two-tailed t-tests and other analytical procedures using the statistical software SPSS and Microsoft Excel (SPSS, version 19, Microsoft Office, 2007). The survey will be based on established questionnaires devised by Young (1999), Williams, (2000), Bradley *et al* (2009) and Kudryavtsev (2012), and the International Social Survey Project (ISSP) (2003) although questions have been adapted to suit the particular nature of the site and the participants involved. As the establishment of a control group is not appropriate in this instance, then an outcome evaluation is the preferred design. Greig *et al* (2007, pg. 104) say this is not as robust a model as an experimental design, but nevertheless good results can be obtained from these studies.

While it had been considered that it could be effective to create a series of new questions, it was felt that it was appropriate in the main to use existing instruments. Punch (2005, pg. 93) feels that using an existing instrument allows one to discover more about its properties; and

also that it would be easier to compare results from other similar studies if the same basic instrument is used. However, Punch (2005, pg. 93) warns that consideration needs to be given to construct validity, as any measuring instrument represents just one operational definition of a variable, and this will differ in another context. In this case, it is suggested that the variation in questions is insufficient to alter the basis on which the existing questionnaires are constructed. In this project, all students in the two groups will be invited to take part, allowing the sampling to be comprehensive, although the groups themselves could be regarded as a representative sample of the first-year entrants to the university.

3.4. Place Attachment

Section 1 of the survey measures place attachment using 12 questions based on a survey model devised by Williams (2000). The construct is further sub-divided into two aspects of place attachment: identity and dependence which is based on a theoretical model from environmental psychology (Brown 1987, Williams 1992, *cited in* Semken and Freeman, 2008, pg. 1048). They note that place dependence is connected to the potential of a place to support the needs and aims of individuals, while place identity is a reflection of an emotional attachment to place. In this survey odd-numbered questions relate to identity, while dependence questions are even-numbered. The five-point Likert scale has answers ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), except for q.10 *The things I do here I would enjoy just as much at another site*, which is reverse coded because of the negative nature of the question.

3.5. Place Meaning

Section 2 of the questionnaire focuses on place meaning described by Kudryavtsev (2012, pg. 3) as the symbolic meanings which people have for specific places. This 11-item section has

been adapted from Young's (1999, *cited in* Semken and Freeman, 2008, pg. 1049) place meaning survey and Kudryavtsev's (2012, pg. 4) ecological place meaning scale. The Likert scale coding is identical to the place attachment section, with questions 5 and 6 reverse coded as they focus on negative aspects of being on the campus. Stedman (2003, *cited in* Semken and Freeman, 2008, pg. 1049) has suggested that earlier quantitative research has focused on place attachment to the neglect of place meaning, and it is important to examine not only how much a place means to an individual, but also what it means. Young's (1999, *cited in* Semken and Freeman, 2008, pg. 1049) survey of a parkland region in Northern Queensland produced a 30-item place meaning scale, some of which was clearly inapplicable to a university campus in South West Wales, e.g. 'important for Aboriginal culture'. However, following the researcher's observation of the campus over one day in the early part of the academic year (Appendix, 7.3), it was decided to include items that reflected the natural characteristic of the site and features that might be of concern to students arriving on site.

'Empirically derived quantitative instruments such as this are intended to synthesise the richness of an interpretive data set with the efficiency of a quantitative survey which enables the collection of large samples and the direct application of statistical analyses to the results (Aikenhead 1988, *cited in* Semken and Freeman, 2008, pg. 1050).

3.6. Place Identity

Section three of the survey will monitor participants' views of attachment to place, gauging their closeness to the Carmarthen campus/Carmarthen/Wales and the UK. Participants will also be asked to rank in order of importance family/nationality/gender/religion and the part of the country in which they live. This survey is based on questions asked during the 2002/3 International Social Survey Project (Inglis, 2009, pg. 5).

3.7. Social Capital

Section four of the survey aims to measure the participants' level of social capital, assessing the importance of networking in communities and the value people accrue from this, with consideration given to place. Questions used relate to doing favours for other people, belonging to clubs and organisations, volunteering for groups or organisations, meeting other people and assessing feelings of belonging. The questions were adapted from a survey by Bradley *et al* (2009) with additional questions inserted on university decision making and how well informed participants were about university services. However, Bradley *et al* (2009, pg. 40) note that while their survey allows for an indicator of social capital strength to be created, it is unable to provide data that delineates between bonding and bridging capital. In the original survey, as some of the answers were not scaled from one to five, but were simply yes/no answers, the data was weighted, scoring 0 for no and 3 for yes. As the survey has been adapted to fulfil different requirements and the questions have been taken out of context from the original, then it has been decided to score the answers 1 for no and 2 for yes.

3.8. Qualitative Methods

To further improve validity and achieve triangulation, a qualitative semi-structured questionnaire based on a 2003 study of Identity, Diversity and Citizenship in Ireland (IDCI) (Inglis, 2009) and Gustafson (2001) will also be used, although again the questions have been altered to suit the specific nature of the project. Those interviewed will be a self-selecting sample, having indicated on the quantitative survey form that they would be prepared to participate. Participants will be asked open-ended questions about how they would describe themselves. They will be asked to itemise places where they have lived, including their current location, and places that have some importance for them such as their family home or locations where friends lived. These responses will then be used for discussions about which

places the participants consider important. Participants will also be asked if their sense of place is reflected in the campus, why they chose Carmarthen, and how their relationship with the site has changed. Questions surrounding their awareness of open spaces around the campus, and whether they used them will also be included in the interviews alongside awareness of wildlife on the campus, and what their opinions were of these issues. They will also be asked about their level of voluntary work

The semi-structured format for interviews, in which questions are prepared but answers can allow the participant considerable freedom in wording their answer, was chosen because it was felt this best met the needs of the research project. Greig *et al* (2007, pg. 122) says that this format allows considerable scope for the interviewee's own ideas to take shape. Answers can be met by prompts to further develop themes. Punch (2005, pg. 175) suggests that for the more unstructured interview it is particularly important to develop listening and communication skills. It was felt that the most appropriate method to record the data was through tape recordings. Inglis (2009, pg. 8) also suggests that qualitative interviews using semi-structured questionnaires have an advantage that they bring to the surface issues and processes that were not regarded at the outset as being of importance. The interviews will begin with open-ended questions about how people would describe themselves and these descriptions and identities will then be explored in more detail (Appendix 7.2).

3.9. Ethics

All social research involves ethical issues because of intrusion into people's lives, but qualitative approaches can also involve more acute issues because of the intrusion into people's lives (Punch, 2005, pg. 276). The main ethical issues are outlined as harm, consent, deception, privacy and confidentiality. A central tenet of the research process is the principle

of informed consent, which Cohen *et al* (2007, pg. 52) say is founded on the participants' right to self determination and freedom. Guidelines produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Welfare (1971, *cited in* Cohen *et al*, 2007, pg. 53) suggest that the purpose of the research should be explained, what risks might occur, what benefits there might be and a clear explanation that the participant is free to withdraw at any time. In this project, informed consent will be obtained from all participants who will be given a letter setting out the aims and benefits of the project. Signatures on the letters of consent will be required and they will be informed that they can withdraw from the project at any time. Confidentiality will be stressed with an assurance that no individual will be identified. Data produced from this research will be treated anonymously and confidentially in accordance with recommendations from the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011, pg. 7), and the 1998 Data Protection Act. The Act demands that personal information must be lawfully and fairly processed for limited purposes, be relevant and adequate, accurate, secure, not retained for longer than necessary, and processed in line with the rights of individuals (Potter, 2006, pg. 186). Participants will also be informed that access to survey data will be provided on request, and the information will be destroyed after 18 months. Interviews will be carried out in public places, such as the campus coffee bar, to ensure safety for all participants.

In this project, efforts will be made to present the research instruments in an unthreatening, informal fashion, to encourage participation without coercion. Problems in the research process can arise if people feel they have to take part in order not to offend the researcher or the staff involved in the college groups (Cohen *et al*, 2007, pg. 54), a point that Potter (2006, pg. 218) agrees with, noting that this could lead to a possible bias in research results. An explanation of the theory of sense of place will be included, couched in simple terms, as

Oliver (2003, pg. 28) has noted that problems can arise when a researcher has difficulty in explaining the nature of the project in easily-understood terms.

It was decided that all those involved in the survey would be referred to as participants, rather than a term such as 'subject', which, it is considered, allows them to take ownership of the project. Oliver (2003, pg. 5) argues that using the correct terminology results in a greater level of respect for the people supplying the data. He further considers that Kant's theory of categorical imperatives, which suggests that choices should be made using criteria that could become universal principles underscores the point that the use of the term 'subject' could reduce a person's status. It is also important that people should see themselves as taking an active part in the research process, an issue that concerned Kierkegaard (*cited in Cohen et al, 2007, pg. 17*) who felt that people should be able to consider their own response to a research project and realise their potential. Oates (*cited in Potter, 2006, pg. 201*) suggests that the term 'participants' acknowledges the fact that people providing the data have a stake in the process, giving up their time and permitting an intrusion into their private space. It is suggested that the use of interviews in the qualitative section of the survey will encourage the participants to use processes of reflection and reason, enhancing their feelings of self worth. The interview has many advantages as Kvale (1996, *cited in Cohen et al, 2007, pg. 349*) suggests their use allows a shift from considering research participants as subjects to be manipulated and data as divorced from the individual, to a situation where information is created between people, accentuating social interaction. Cohen *et al* (2007, pg. 349) opine that interviews allow everyone involved in the research process to give their own take on the world surrounding them, meaning that the interview is not just recording details about life, but is a valid part of life itself. It is suggested that many interviewees actively enjoy the process and feel that their views matter (Oliver, 2003, pg. 56). It is considered ethically

important for the researcher to make sure that the participant gains something from the process.

3.10. Reliability and Validity

The content validity of the quantitative items, i.e. whether the ideas relating to the conceptual definitions involved are represented in the measure, (Punch, 2005, pg. 97) is based on the choice of questions which reflect the activities taking place on campus and the natural features present on the site. The construct validity, i.e. how well the instruments conform to theoretical expectations, (Punch, 2005, pg. 98) can be established through reference to the successful operation of previous tests for place meaning and place attachment, e.g. Williams (2000), Semken and Freeman (2008) and Kudryavtsev (2011). Construct validity for place meaning is most relevant when related to the use of Young's 1999 questionnaire as an absolute measure of place meaning (Semken and Freeman, 2008, pg. 1050). Semken and Freeman postulate that administering a pre- and post-test place meaning survey using an identical instrument will mean that the participants' perception of the five-point scale will be similar in both cases and, therefore, the outcome will be an acceptable measure of a relative change in place meaning. It is suggested that similar conclusions can be drawn in this survey. Williams (2000) feels that the place attachment scale is effective for measuring emotional or affective bonds and has validity. Reliability is also shown by the fact that five or six items from the two dimensions will produce a Cronbach's Alpha of .80 or better (Williams, 2000, pg. 1). Cronbach's scale, the coefficient alpha, measures the extent to which the questions are consistent with each other and are all operating in the same way and have the same aim. In the qualitative interviews, there is always the possibility of bias because as Sellitz *et al* (1962, cited in Bell, 2005, pg. 166) point out 'interviewers are human beings and not machines and their manner may have an effect on respondents'. It is important to avoid overweighting facts

that accord with one's personal views and to make sure that all the data is considered, not just a part.

3.11. Conclusion

It is suggested that comparing the results of the pre and post-test surveys will show an increase in place attachment and place meaning, and an improvement in the strength of social capital, thus demonstrating that a highly developed sense of place will contribute to the fostering of strong affective bonds with place and people, and that identity is inextricably linked with place. It is suggested that symbolic place meanings related to natural features will attract a positive response, and the particular setting of this study, a heavily treed and grassed campus, will result in a high scoring survey response. It is anticipated that an analysis of the replies in the qualitative part of the project will show a similar indication of the growing importance of sense of place over the period of time students have spent on the campus.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The results will be explored through consideration of place attachment, place meaning, closeness to place, identity rankings, social capital and qualitative interviews. The data was collected using established Likert surveys and other questionnaires, adapted to suit the particular requirements of the research project, and the results analysed using paired T-tests, correlation, analysis of variance and descriptive analysis.

The hypotheses tested in this research were:

- *Place attachment and place meaning would increase over the period of time students spent on campus*
- *Social capital levels would be enhanced over the same period as a sense of place develops.*

The research questions which were drawn from the literature review asked of the data:

- *How does place attachment and place meaning increase over the period of time students spent on campus?*
- *Does the development of a sense of place increase affective bonds?*
- *Does place contribute to a sense of identity?*
- *Does social capital develop alongside a sense of place?*

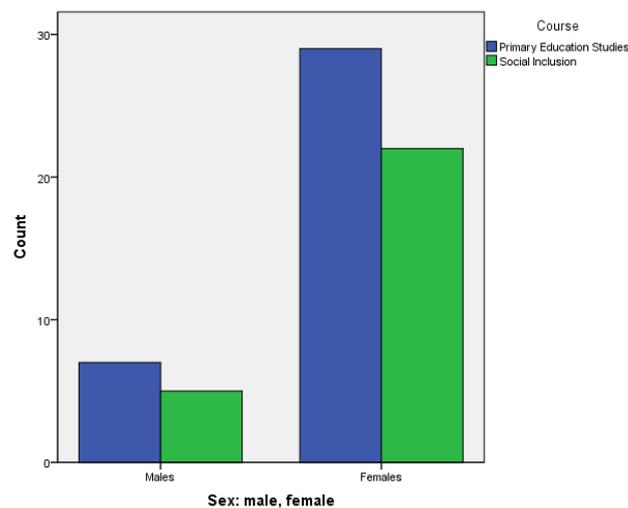
Paired T-tests on place attachment showed an increase in mean courses from Time 1 to Time 2, while a similar T-test on place meaning showed a small increase in mean scores. Social capital mean scores were almost identical between T1 and T2. Results for T1 and T2 for identity were inconclusive, although it was possible to discern clear preferences for family and national identity.

4.2. Profile of Participants

Surveys were completed in October 2013 (Time 1) and January 2014 (Time 2). A total of 63 students completed returns for T1, and 49 for T2, 12 males and 51 females at T1 and eight

males and 41 females at T2. Unfortunately, fewer students were present in classes at the time of the T2 sampling, resulting in the lower returns, which may have had an effect on the overall results. Some results were submitted in percentage terms and others as a count, but these were descriptive figures, not the result of running statistical tests. For the qualitative interviews five students participated; three from the Primary Studies course and two from the Social Inclusion course. Four were female and one male, which reflected the gender divide across the courses (Fig 1). The interviews were conducted at the end of January, when it was felt that the students had become more familiar with the campus.

4.2.1. *Figure 1: Programme by gender*



4.3. Place Attachment

- *How does place attachment increase over the period of time students spent on campus?*

Place attachment scores in T1 and T2 ranged from 2.20 to 3.65, which at the lower end is close to the midpoint of the scale.

- S.2¹ *This campus is the best place for what I like to do*

¹ S.2 refers to Statement 2

had the highest score with a mean of 3.43 (T1) and 3.65 (T2). The lowest score, with a mean of 2.20 (T1) and 2.53 (T2), was for

- *S.12² This is my favourite place to go to during my free time.*

Results for T1 and T2 showed that there was not a marked difference between the identity and dependence questions. Using a paired T-test (Fig 2), place attachment at T1 showed a mean score of 35.07 with a SD of 6.602. At T2, the mean score was 37.17 with a SD of 7.622. The T-test showed a sig. value of .011, indicating a significant statistical difference between the two scores – 2.10. This validates the hypothesis that place attachment would increase between T1 and T2 as students become more at home with life on campus, endorsing Low and Altman’s (1992) view that place attachment is linked to human-place bonding and the emotional ties that result from place interactions. It is suggested that Tuan’s (1980) view that these ties produces ‘a steady accretion of sentiment’ could be in evidence here. It is also suggested that the social context in which this experience occurs is of importance in the development of meaningful place encounters. Hay (1998, *cited in* Kyle and Chick, 2007, pg. 211) considers that such experiences often occur in the ‘presence of significant others’. In other words, part of the development of place attachment on campus may well be influenced by the forging of affective bonds between fellow students and other significant figures at the university.

4.3.1. Figure 1: Place attachment T-test

T-test: Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Place attach Time 1	35.07	42	6.602	1.019
	Place attach Time 2	37.17	42	7.622	1.176

² *S.12 refers to Statement 12*

The Cronbach Alpha for the place attachment scale was 0.90 at T1 and 0.91 at T2 which demonstrates a strong internal consistency. A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the impact of the participant’s home site on levels of place attachment. Participants either lived on campus (1), Carmarthen (2) or somewhere else (3). The sig. value for T1 was 0.006 and for T2 0.001, indicating a significant statistical difference between the three groups, although the actual difference was quite small. The effect size calculated using ETA squared was 0.2 at T1 and 0.4 at T2 which is considered a large effect. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for group 1 was significantly different from group 2 and group 3, which suggests that students living on campus have a greater place attachment to the campus than the others (Fig 3).

4.3.2. *Figure 2: Home site attachment ANOVA*

	T1 M	T1 SD	T2 M	T 2 SD
Group 1	37.52	5.13	41.71	4.99
Group 2	31.82	5.27	32.56	8.72
Group 3	31.92	7.20	34.07	6.39

The stronger attachment that campus-based students have reported endorses Tuan’s (1977) view that attachment increases through frequent or long experience of place. It is suggested that students who are immersed in the intensive daily routines of campus life are more likely to develop strong attachments.

4.4. Place Meaning

- *How does place meaning increase over the period of time students spent on campus?*

Place meaning scores were higher than for place attachment and ranged from 2.86 to 4.17, again around the midpoint of the scale for the lower scoring items. The lowest scoring item at 2.86 (T1) and 3.00 (T2) was

- S.8³ *this campus is a place to watch birds and animals.*

The highest scoring item at 4.27 (T1) and 4.17 (T2) was

- S.6⁴ *this campus is unsafe.*

However this statement was reverse coded for analysis, indicating a strong level of disagreement with this view. A paired T-test was performed (Fig 1) which showed a mean of 38.21 at T1 with a SD of 4.46. At T2, the mean was 39.05 with a SD of 4.68. The sig. value for this test was 0.17, indicating that there no statistical significance between the two scores. Nevertheless, there was a small increase of 0.84, which indicates that there is a stable response to place meaning over T1 and T2, but the hypothesis that place meaning would increase was not substantiated.

The Cronbach Alpha for place meaning was 0.82 at T1 and 0.81 at T2, indicating a good internal consistency. The relationship between place attachment and place meaning was investigated using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pallant, 2007, pg. 133). There was a significant positive correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.35$, $n = 57$, $p < .008$ at T1 and at T2, $r = 0.29$, $n = 47$, $p < .05$. A positive correlation indicates that as one

³ S.8 refers to Statement 8

⁴ S.6 refers to Statement 6

variable increases so does the other, giving, in this instance, a medium relationship strength. This indicates that there is a link between place attachment and place meaning. An ANOVA was performed using the same criterion as for place attachment but no statistical significance was noted, meaning that there was no difference between the three groups living on campus, Carmarthen, or somewhere else.

4.4.1. *Figure 1: Place meaning T-test*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Place meaning Time 1	38.21	39	4.456	.713
	Place meaning Time 2	39.05	39	4.679	.749

While the results for place attachment may show that attachment developed as students who were new to the campus reacted positively as they became accustomed to their environment, nevertheless, despite the insignificant increase in place meaning totals, place meaning scores were higher at both T1 and T2 when compared with place attachment. This suggests that place meaning is of considerable importance to the participants. This positive endorsement of place meanings on campus, which was also reflected in the interviewees' comments⁵, suggests that Kyle and Chick's view (2007) that places are symbolic contexts imbued with meaning is borne out here. For first-year students new to the campus, perhaps it will take longer for place meaning to develop. Stedman *et al* (2004, *cited in* Kyle and Chick, pg. 215) consider that place meaning develops over a lifetime of life experiences shared with others, so that places are defined by what has happened there, rather than physical attributes.

An intriguing explanation for the way the development of place meaning could be affected comes from the work of Hillier (1996, *cited in* Seamon, 2012, pg. 31) who says that traditional pathway patterns, known as 'deformed grids' have frequently been replaced by

⁵ Interviews will be discussed in section 4.8.

systems of segregated pathways that degrade face-to-face interaction, keeping pathway users apart spatially and environmentally. This gives much less chance for what Tuan has described as ‘fields of care’ to occur, places that come to be regarded affectionately through ‘serendipitous experiences’. In other words, it is suggested that the pathway systems around the campus do not necessarily contribute to the development of place meaning associations because of their contrived construction. Earlier research in this field, principally Kudryavtsev (2012) had found no difference in place attachment scores for a group of students working on environmental projects in the Bronx, New York, but had noted increases in place meaning. It was suggested that place attachment was unlikely to increase over the short period of the intervention, particularly for students living in the area, whereas place meaning increased as a result of the intense nature of the environmental programme.

4.5. Closeness to Place

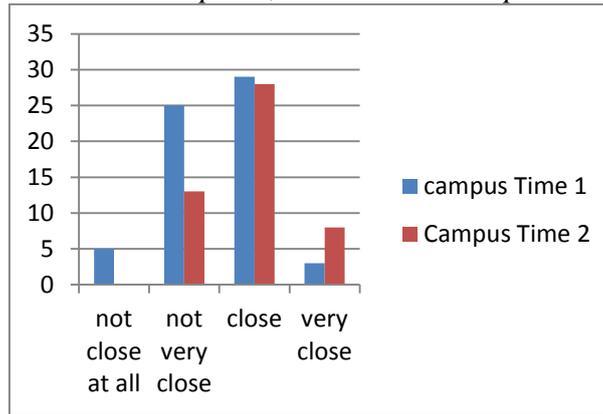
- *Does the development of a sense of place increase affective bonds?*

In the closeness to place section, participants were asked to list their level of closeness to four sites:

- Carmarthen campus,
- Carmarthen,
- Wales
- United Kingdom

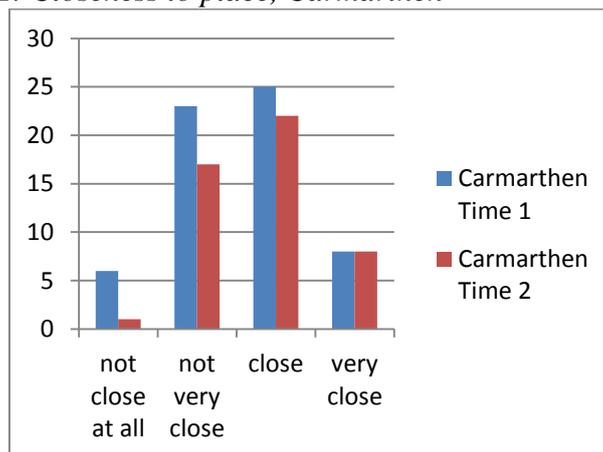
For the Carmarthen campus (Fig 1), highest scores were for the ‘close’ section (T1: 46%, 29, and T2: 40.6%, 28), followed by ‘not very close’ (T1: 39.7%, 25, and T2: 18.8%, 13).

4.5.1. *Figure 1: Closeness to place, Carmarthen campus*



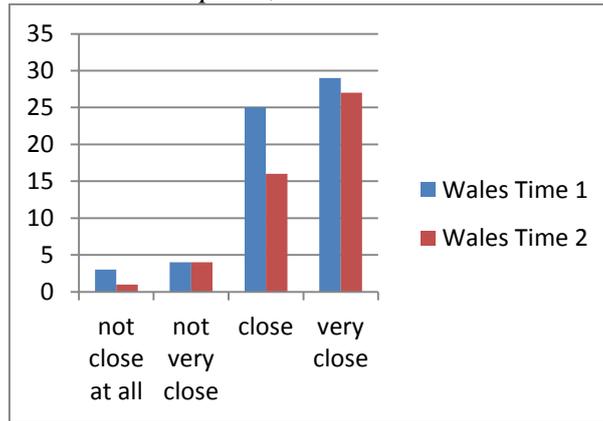
For Carmarthen (Fig 2), the highest score was for ‘close’ (T1: 39.7% per cent, 25, and T2: 31.9%, 22,) followed by ‘not very close’ (T1: 36.5%, 23, and T2: 24.6%, 17).

4.5.2. *Figure 2: Closeness to place, Carmarthen*



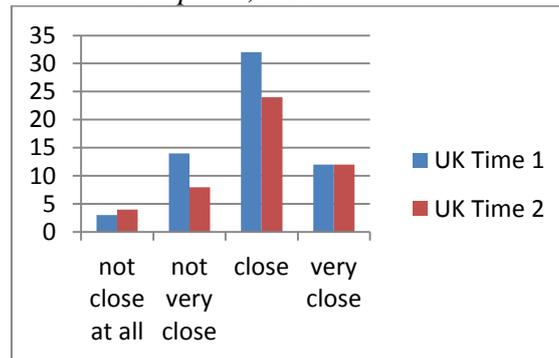
In the Wales section (Fig 3), the highest score was for very close (T1: 46%, 29, and T2: 39.1%, 27) followed by ‘close’ (T1: 39.7%, 25, and T2: 23.2%, 16).

4.5.3. Figure 3: Closeness to place, Wales



For the UK (Fig 4), highest score was for ‘close’ (T1: 50.8%, 32, and T2: 34.8%, 24) and for T1 this was followed by ‘not very close (22.2%, 14) and for T2 ‘very close’ (17.4%, 12).

4.5.4. Figure 4: Closeness to place, UK



Results for the campus showed a small increase in the *very close* section and a decrease in *not very close* from T1 to T2, indicating a strengthening of attachment. Results for Carmarthen and the UK were mixed, with not much variation between T1 and T2, although most of the results were lower for T2. There was a strong positive outcome for the Wales section, although the highest score was for the T1 ‘close’ figure for the UK. This indicates a connection to country is stronger than a connection to local place. The connection to Wales was stronger than the connection to the UK, so questions of national identity are clearly important here. Inglis (2009, pg. 12) considers that many people can have a strong sense of

identity not just with their home area but also with a country as a whole. Place identity can then best be understood as a type of interlocking, overlapping construction of bonding and belonging. It is also suggested that the social construct of Welsh identity allows for a greater appreciation of Welshness than, for instance, being part of the United Kingdom. Wales' perceived position as a country on the edge of the UK, isolated but unified by its separate language and customs may go some way to explaining this survey response (Bechhofer and McCrone, 2009).

It is suggested that because the sample surveyed were students they may perhaps feel a stronger affinity to areas outside college such as their home town or, indeed, their country, which further indicates that place attachment and place meaning ties can be a long time forming. As Kudryavtsev (2011, pg. 231) has noted place identity is the extent to which a place contributes to a definition of self, and the embryonic nature of place attachment for first-year students would seem to indicate that a wider place setting such as a country would elicit a greater response. Equally, it could be argued that the connection to country can be explained by students' relative mobility and an endorsement of Massey's (1993) view of a global sense of local. In other words, Tuan (1997) and Relph's (1976) insistence on 'existential insideness' as a prerequisite for a connection to place is not a view shared by the more mobile and independent student who may subscribe to Marx's view of the 'annihilation of space by time'. As Urry (1994) has noted, 'modern society is a society on the move'.

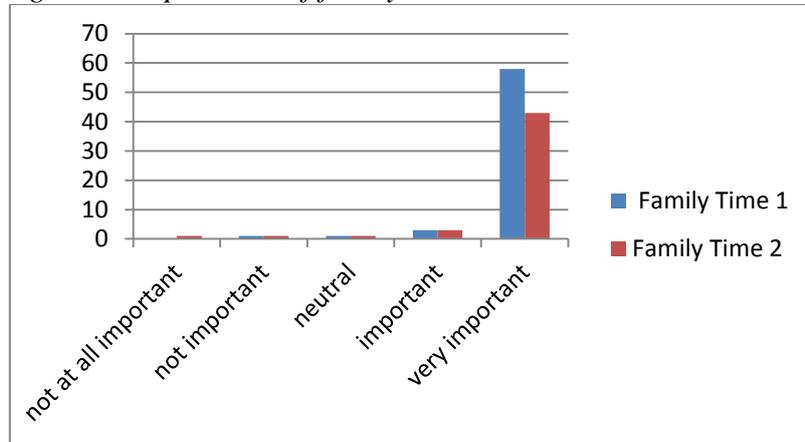
4.6. Identity Rankings

- *Does place contribute to a sense of identity?*

Participants were asked to rank in terms of importance family, nationality, gender, religion and the part of the country in which they live. For 'family' (Fig 1), the highest scores were

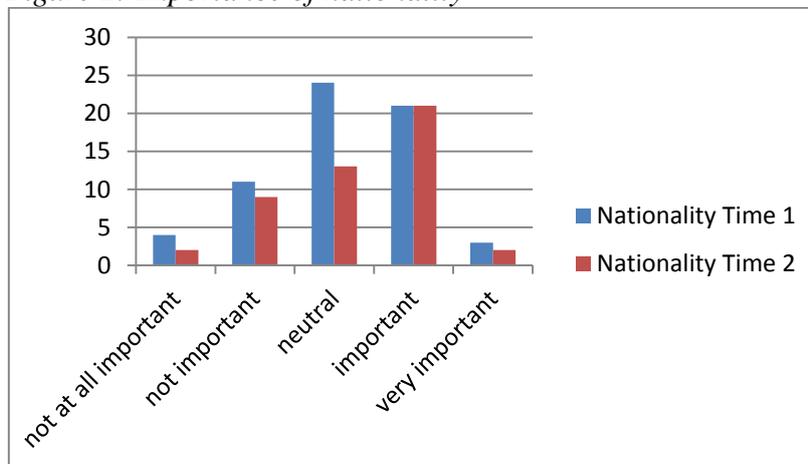
for *most important*, 92.1%, 58, (T1) and 62.3%, 43, (T2) followed by *important* (4.8%, 3, T1, 4.3%, 3, T2).

4.6.1. *Figure 1: Importance of family*



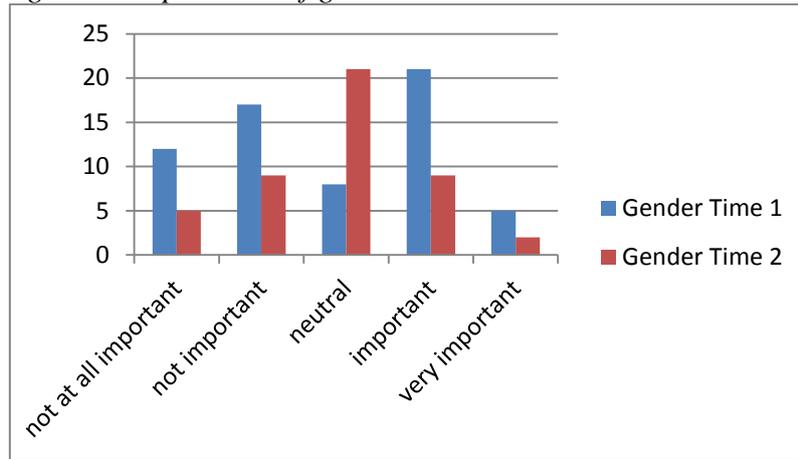
For ‘nationality’ (Fig 2), the highest scores were for *neutral* at T1 (38.1%, 24) and *important* at T2 (30.4%, 21) followed by *important* (33.3%, 21, T1, and *neutral* 18.8%, 13, T2).

4.6.2. *Figure 2: Importance of nationality*



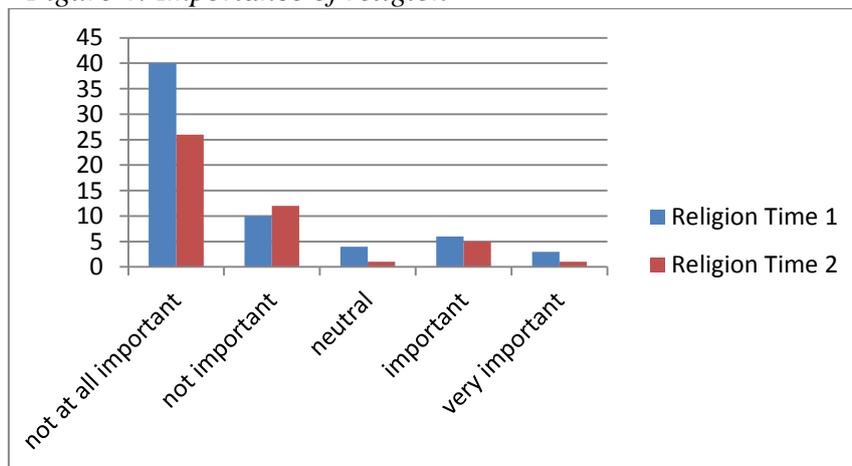
‘Gender’ (Fig 3) highest scores were *important* at T1 (33.3%, 21) and *neutral* at T2 (30.4%, 21), followed by *not important* (27%, 17, T1) and *important* and *not important* for T2 (13%, 9).

4.6.3. Figure 3: Importance of gender



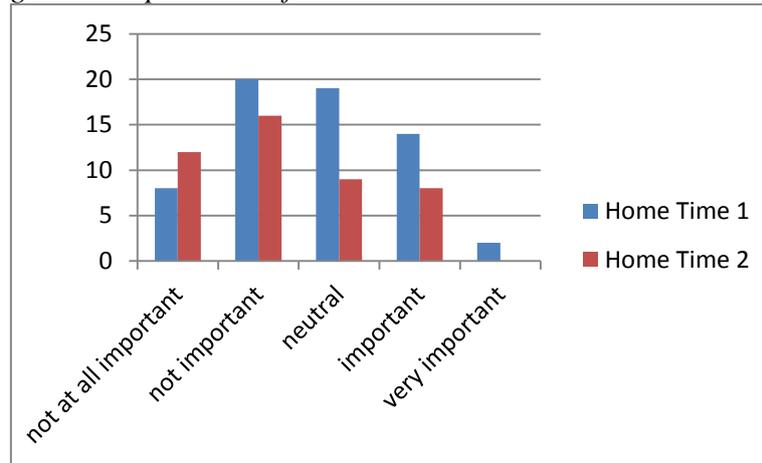
Highest scores for 'religion' (Fig 4) were *not at all important* at T1 (63.5%, 40) and T2 (37.7%, 26) followed by *not important* (15.9%, 10, T1, and 17.4%, 12, T2).

4.6.4. Figure 4: Importance of religion



Highest scores for 'part of the country in which you live' (Fig 5) were *not important* at T1 (31.7%, 20) and at T2 (23.2%, 16) followed by *neutral* at T1 (30.2%, 19) and *not at all important* at T2 (17.4%, 12).

4.6.5. Figure 5: Importance of home



In contrast to other sense of place questions, *family* was clearly the most important factor in people's lives, although there was a dip between T1 and T2, while *gender* scores, another personal construct, were also relatively high.

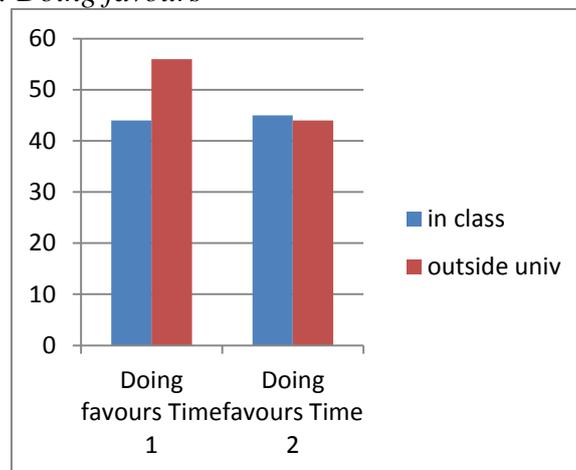
Part of the country in which you live attracted a low score, again with a reduced figure at T2, indicating that students may not view a place of origin as a particularly important facet of their lives, perhaps because of their relative mobility. In addition, humans, as social beings, might be expected to choose familial affiliations over a connection to place. Many of the students would also be away from home for the first time, and would put a greater emphasis on family. This emphasis on the personal at the expense of place argues against Creswell's (2004) contention that place and self are inextricably linked. Nevertheless, while place, as such, was not highly regarded, nationality was considered important, as was also shown in the Wales figures in the closeness to place results (s4.5). This reinforces the point that there is a strong connection to Welsh identity, with the findings validated through the process of triangulation.

4.7. Social Capital

- *Does social capital develop alongside a sense of place?*

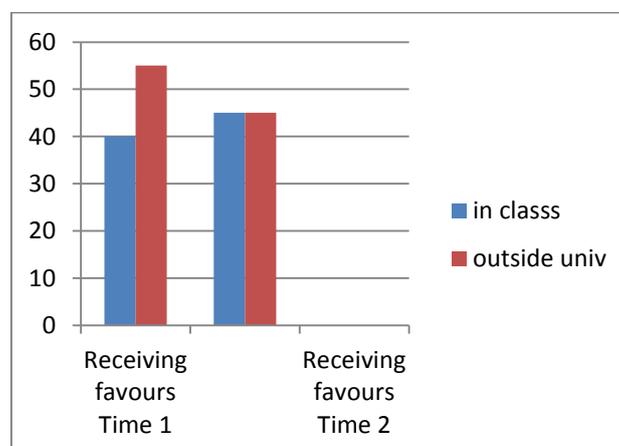
The first part of this section looked at favours done and received both inside the university and outside. For T1, 69.8% (44)⁶ of participants had done a favour for someone in their class in the past six months and 88.9% (56) outside college. At T2, the figures were 65.2% (45) for a class favour and 63.8% (44) for outside college (Fig 1).

4.7.1. *Figure 1: Doing favours*



Receiving favours scored 63.5% (40) in college and 87.3% (55) outside for T1 and for T2, 65.2% (45) in college and 65.2% (45) outside (Fig 2).

4.7.2. *Figure 2: Receiving favours*



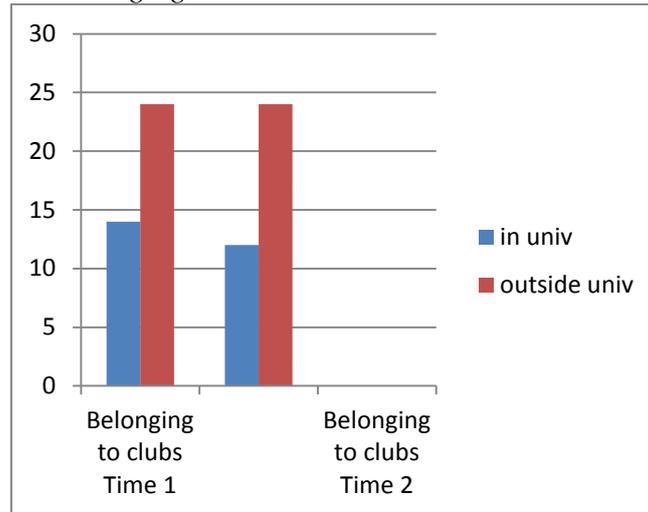
⁶There is a different between the count in the T1 and T2 groups; it was decided to use the individual count for each group as being 100%; non-returns were not included in these percentages.

While there was little variation between T1 and T2 and between favours inside and outside university, nevertheless the high scores indicate that both bonding and bridging links relating to social capital are operating. The giving and receiving of favours outside university scored more highly in T1, indicating that for first year students, home activities were more important at the beginning of the year.

Bradley *et al* (2009, pg. 8) suggest that links between social capital and sense of place can be traced through place attachment (which has already been shown to have increased) and higher levels of self-esteem. There is also a link between social capital and place dependency through the social interactions created by place. In other words, the development of campus connections and links to the wider world facilitate reciprocal actions of helping and being helped. For first year students, social capital levels may also indicate their ease of adjustment to academic life. Students able to find out from significant people in their lives about university courses and how to manage academic workloads have the social capital to extrapolate useful information which contributes to self-esteem and can develop confidence and attachments, both personal and place.

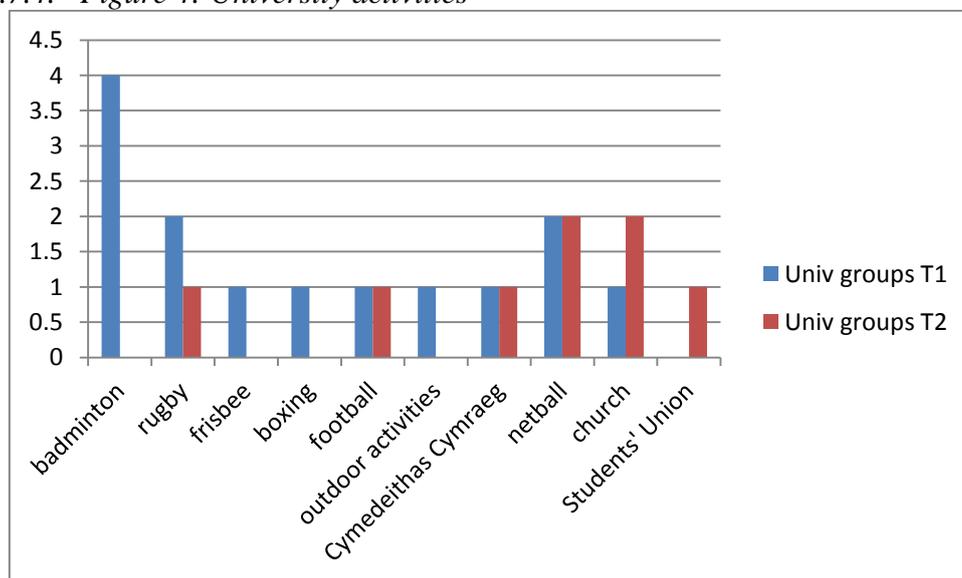
Participation in clubs and organisations showed that for T1, 22.2 per cent (14) belonged to such a group in university and 38.1 per cent (24) outside. For T2, the figures were 17.4% (12) and 34.8% (24) (Fig 3).

4.7.3. Figure 3: Belonging to clubs

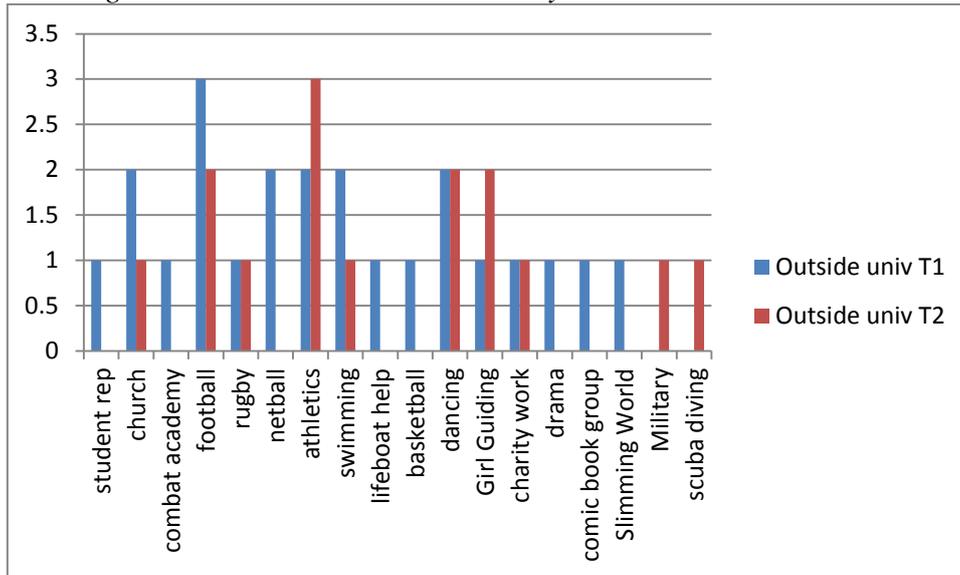


University groups are shown in Fig 4 and groups outside university in Figure 5. There was a wide range of activities undertaken, incorporating a broad mix of sport, but only one or two people were involved and no discernible pattern of interest could be detected as the responses were so low scoring.

4.7.4. Figure 4: University activities

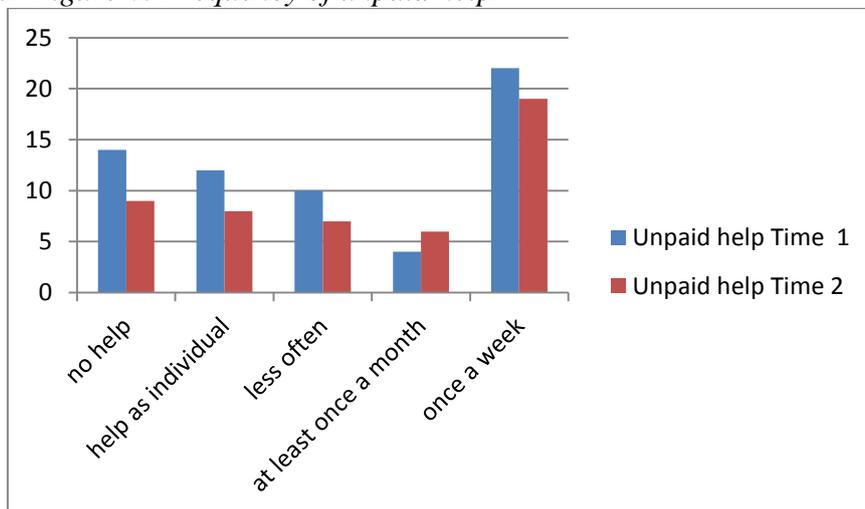


4.7.5. Figure 5: Activities outside university



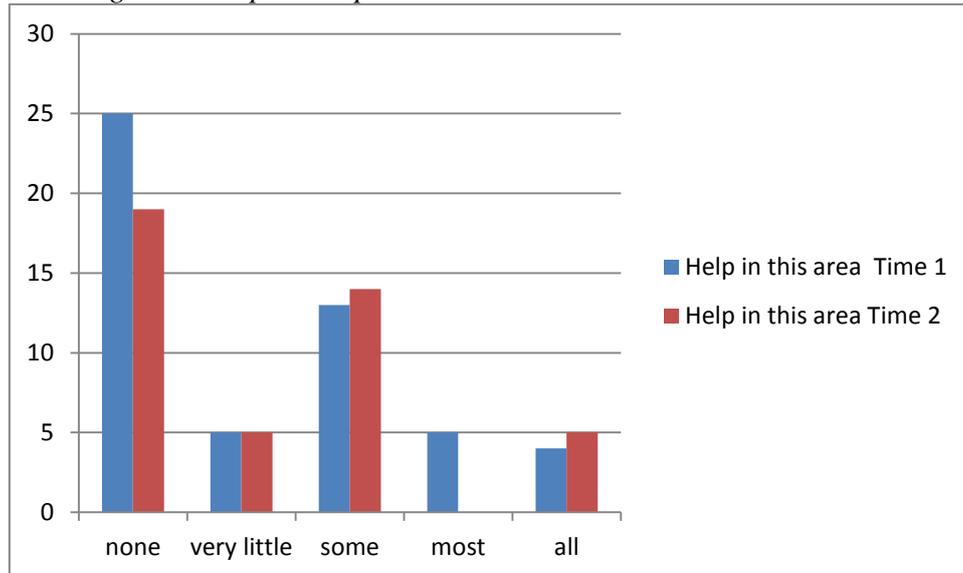
Participants were also asked to rate how often they had given any unpaid help over the last 12 months. Highest scoring results were for *at least once a week*: T1, 34.9% (22) and T2, 27.5% (19) (Fig 6), a good indicator of the level of social capital operating.

4.7.6. Figure 6: Frequency of unpaid help



In answer to the question *how much of this work was in this area?* (Fig 7) the highest scoring response was none: 39.7% (25) at T1 and 27.5% (19) at T2, although the second highest results were *some* 20.6% (13) at T1 and 20.3% (14) at T2. There was little variation between T1 and T2, indicating that social capital levels have remained relatively unchanged.

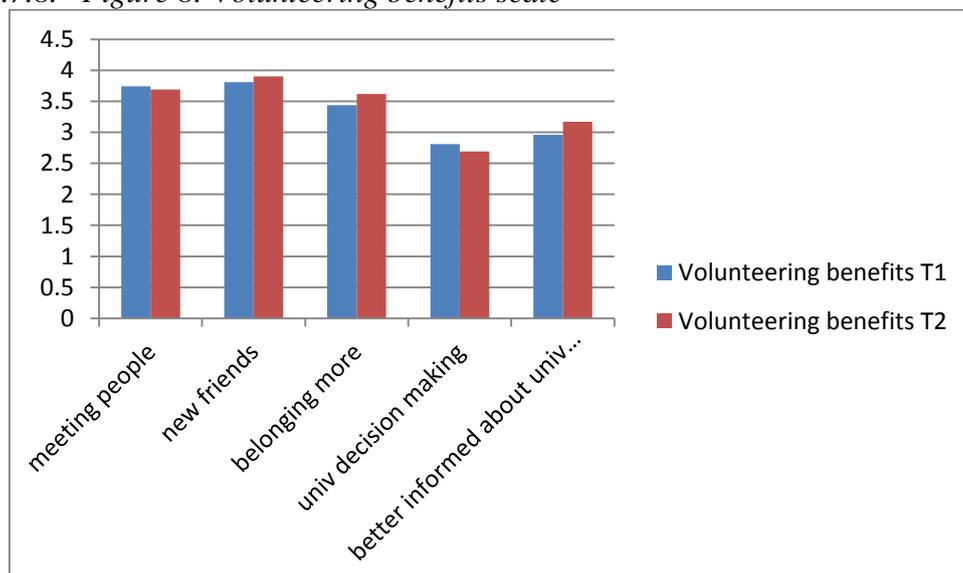
4.7.7. Figure 7: Unpaid help in local area



Participants were also asked to name the organisations and describe the activities, with school and care-giving activities the most popular, perhaps unsurprisingly, as these activities are closely linked to the two courses. A range of sports were also listed, but, again, only one or two people were involved in each activity.

The final part of the social capital section was a scale designed to measure the benefits of volunteering to help others (Fig 8).

4.7.8. Figure 8: Volunteering benefits scale



This showed a Cronbach Alpha of 0.57 at T1 and 0.78 at T2, indicating a low level of consistency regarding the questions. It is sometimes difficult to achieve a decent Cronbach Alpha value in scales with a low number of items (Pallant, 2007, pg. 98). This scale only had five items, so to check for reliability and consistency an alternative needed to be used. An alternative indicator is the mean inter-item correlation figure, which for this five-item scale is 0.21 at T1 and 0.41 at T2. However, this also indicates that the relationship between items is not strong. A paired T-test (Fig 9) showed a mean of 16.86 at T1 (SD=2.67) and 16.81 (SD=3.6) at T2, a slight drop of 0.05. The sig. value was 0.91, showing there is no statistical difference between the scores. Mean responses ranged from 2.69 to 3.90, again around the mid-point of the scale. Scores for *making new friends*, *belonging to the area* and *becoming better informed about the university* all showed slight increases from T1 to T2, indicating a positive response when measuring social capital strength.

4.7.9. Figure 9: social capital T-test

T-test: Paired Samples Statistics					
		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Social capital Time 1	16.86	36	2.674	.446
	Social capital Time 2	16.81	36	3.608	.601

The relationship between place attachment and place meaning and social capital was investigated using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a medium positive correlation between the three variables, $r = 0.33$, $n = 54$, $p < .014$ at T1 and $r = .035$, $n = 47$, $p = .05$. A positive correlation indicates that as one variable increases, so does the other, giving a reasonable strength to the relationship. A one-way ANOVA (Fig 10) was carried out to measure the relationship between home place (campus, Carmarthen, somewhere else) and social capital. The sig. value was 0.034 at T1, indicating a significant statistical difference between the three groups, although the actual difference was quite small. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed that the mean score for group 1 was

significantly different from group 2, but not group 3. However, at T2, the sig. value was 0.13, with no statistical difference between the groups.

4.7.10. Figure 10: Home site social capital ANOVA

	T1 M	T1 SD	T2 M	T 2 SD
Group 1	17.57	2.66	17.27	4.38
Group 2	14.83	2.66	14.57	2.94
Group 3	16.87	3.10	17.53	2.34

Responses indicate that there is a positive level of social capital operating, although there has been no statistical difference in the scores between T1 and T2. It is suggested that linking these results to the scores for place attachment and place meaning, plus other survey responses in the social capital section, validates Bradley *et al's* (2009) suggestion that beneficial social capital outcomes can result from people with a strong sense of place. In this research, the high level of favours both given and received and the frequency of unpaid help noted indicate that social capital is a powerful aspect of the students' interactions.

4.8. Qualitative Interviews

A total of five students were interviewed, two of whom live on campus and three at home. They were asked a total of 15 questions from which a rich vein of narrative (Elliott, 2005) has provided an in-depth insight into their connection to place, their identity and whether it has been defined by place, and their level of social capital. To ensure confidentiality, the interviewees are referred to by a number and M or F for male or female (BERA, 2011, pg. 7). The five interviewees had very different ways of describing themselves: F1 saw herself as

“friendly and quiet” (F1)

while F2 saw herself as

“outgoing” (F2)

but with a caveat that she could become completely silent in certain situations. F3 also regarded herself as

“quiet” (F3).

F4 described herself as an outdoors sort of person, enjoying the beach and coastal path near her home in Pembrokeshire. M1 saw himself as

‘a work in progress’ (F3).

It was interesting that only one of the interviewees initially defined their identity in terms of place, for them the personal appeared to be the more important aspect. However, when asked what place meant to them and whether their identity was linked to place, F1 thought that place and identity were part of an inclusive process; while F2 considered that the way you spoke allowed people to anchor you in a place context:

“We’ve all come into uni and we’ve had different accents and the way you speak – people identify where you’re from” (F2).

This endorsed Inglis’ (2009) view that identity with place involves processes of social labelling and identification. F3 also agreed that identity is linked to a sense of place. M1 regarded place as important and considered his participation in a college course as being

“in the right place at the right time” (M1).

This is an interesting use of the social representational metaphor of being in the ‘right place’ (Moscovici, 1984). However, he felt identity was a personal construct and not linked to where he was from.

“It’s about my identity as me and I take responsibility for me.” (M1)

For F4, the important places linked to her personal development were regarded as special.

'I think the way I view the world is linked to a sense of place and particularly strongly to childhood places,' she said. (F4)

She felt that the places she lived in when growing up shaped the kind of person she was today. This relationship to place allows people to become what Relph (1976) has termed 'existential insiders'.

Interpretations of nationality saw a wide variation. F1 thought that nationality was not particularly important, dwelling more on the personal. For her, describing someone's nationality was just a label which failed to take into account individuality, a distinction made by Locke (1690) who saw a clear separation between personal identity and place. This was also supported by the findings in the statistical data.

Casey's (2001) views that there is no place without self and no self without place are echoed by the comments of the other interviewees. F2 was influenced by her Welsh-speaking friends who were adamant in saying they were Welsh when asked where they were from, and while describing herself as South Walian, acknowledged that her family

"was a bit of a mix" (F2)

coming from Wales, Scotland and England. F3 agreed that nationality was important. M1 saw himself as Welsh first, although he did not feel his identity was linked to speaking Welsh, and secondly as a Llanelli man. He regarded Wales as a very tribal place, with different villages competing against each other, although he felt that everyone came together as a Welsh entity when Wales were playing England in rugby. F4 said that she hated her home town of Walsall in the Midlands, as it was too urban. She also disliked the accent, and the way people from that area were perceived, but she noted that as she was getting older, then nationality was

becoming more important as it gave her a strong link to her roots. These personal constructs have been elaborated on by Inglis (2009) who has noted that identities are a type of cultural tool kit that people use to construct an image and understanding of themselves.

Experience of place suggests a strong relationship with local communities. F1 stressed the attractions of her home near Stroud,

“a quiet little town” (F1)

and also the community feel of Chalford, a small village where she also lived,

“It felt like a proper little community”. (F1)

However, she also felt that although home was important, the most powerful influence was any place where her family happen to be,

“It’s more personal than place for me,” (F1)

endorsing the philosopher Langer’s (1953) view that place need not have a fixed location. The findings in the identity section of the survey (4.5) of the importance of family reinforce this opinion. On campus, she valued the smallness and closeness of the site as opposed to living in a big city, although, while she liked the peace and quiet during the day, she was not fond of the noisy nights. However, she still felt that the smallness of the campus helped create a community feel.

F2 grew up in the Valleys town of Tredegar, a place she returns to with other friends as part of a performing arts group

“which brings us all back together again”. (F2)

In university, she lives on campus, an experience she values as a way of creating a sense of identity.

“It is important living on campus, because there are some people who live off campus but don’t seem to have made friends as much as the rest of us. It’s like we’ve made our own town in a way.” (F2)

This proto-town creation indicates how humans are moved to develop societies based on place and strengthen place attachment. F2 said she spent Christmas telling her parents that she wanted to return to campus

“because once you have moved away, and you go back, and you say, well, I don’t live here anymore”. (F2)

This connection to a particular ‘place’, created out of an amalgam of students, suggests that Inglis’s (2009) view that identification with place remains a powerful driver for people is a valid contention. There may be agreement with Flusty (2004) that an attachment to ‘different’ local sites is a reaction to the conformity of globalisation. In other words, people may move around the world, but remain connected to their roots: their place of birth and development. F3 has remained close to her childhood home, growing up in Furnace in Llanelli and then living in Stradey. For her, studying at university has given her confidence.

“When I first started the course, I didn’t open my mouth.” (F3)

As Kudryavtsev (2012) has noted, place attachment can be strengthened through social interplay and also through people becoming active members of the community. M1 grew up in Llanelli and then moved to North Wales, but felt that cultural differences prompted him to return to South Wales.

“I suffered from something that in Welsh is called ‘hiraeth’, a longing for home”. (M1)

For him, home, as a concept, was paramount.

“I need to have a safe and comfortable home and that’s important.” (M1)

This focus on the home can be explored through Heidegger's (1971) concept of 'desien' (dwelling) which considered the importance of a cosy home for a family, a view that was echoed by F4, who also considered that home was crucially important in her psychological well-being. These viewpoints also reflect Seamon's suggestion (1979) that home is a place to rest and withdraw from the world.

M1 also suggested an interesting concept of the mind as a place, considering that a cluttered and untidy mind created a cluttered and untidy life, so that 'place' had to be right. This phenomenological stance endorses Creswell (2004) comment that we cannot be conscious without being conscious of something, creating a relationship between self and world. M1's emphasis on the personal was also reflected in his view of the campus: for him it was the people who were the most important aspect.

"I think you could be in the dingiest building but it's the people and the experience that it brings." (M1)

These perceptions of place may also be linked to the students' current position: F1 and F2 are based on campus, while F3, F4 and M1 travel in from their homes.

Commenting on the open spaces and the flora and fauna around the campus, F1 enjoyed the effect of the lights on the trees at night and noted that the natural aspects of the campus had a positive effect on her.

"It makes me feel kind of calmer and it's less busy, nature makes me feel less rushed." (F1)

This was a comment echoed by F3, who reacted positively to the presence of trees on the campus and felt that the natural aspects of the campus had

"a calming atmosphere2. (F3)

F4 also described the campus as

“tranquil” (F4)

and appreciated the buildings’ sense of history.

“It just felt a very friendly place to be”. (F4)

She also noted that she has not yet had time to explore the campus fully. If this is a view shared by other students, then that could explain the statistically insignificant difference in place meaning scores, as they have been unable, as of yet, to fully appreciate the natural attributes of the site (see 4.4). F2 enjoyed the open spaces around the campus by taking part in football games and noted the prettiness of parts of the campus, taking pleasure in seeing squirrels running around.

“I like that, because where I live is very much like that”. (F2)

M1 valued the greenness of the campus and the trees and nature in general and enjoyed walking on the grass.

‘I’m more comfortable walking on the grass, so in the absence of any signs saying keep off the grass, I walk on the grass every opportunity I get. That’s not to destroy it. I reserve the right to commune with nature.’ (M1)

As Wilson (1984), Kaplan (2005) and Bird (2007) have noted, humans are hard-wired to respond to the natural environment and this can be a positive factor in developing place attachments and place meaning. Johnston (2013) has suggested that humans are predisposed to feel at peace in the countryside and confused in urban areas, even if they grew up in a city. This implies that a predilection for the rural is genetically based.

Asked how relationships with the university have changed over time, F1 noted that she always liked the campus but had never really liked the course she was on. F2 commented that

the cliquiness of the first semester, with students staying in their hall groups, had begun to break down with students mingling together more.

“I think we’ve all bonded more”. (F2)

F3 found the helpfulness of college staff had contributed to her positive views of the place.

For M1, the link with college has become stronger, not only through an attachment to place but also because of the people.

“People make the place for me”. (M1)

F4 said she had become fonder of the place as the course has progressed, developing friendships and developing a familiarity with the campus.

It is clear from these answers that the personal resonates more than the place, but it could be argued that the nature of the place helps create their personalities. There is an interplay between the personal and place. As Creswell (2004) notes, place is not just an object but a way of perceiving the world. Casey’s (2001) view that there is no place without self and no self without place is echoed by the interviewees’ comments.

Views of their homes have changed for most interviewees over the period on campus: F1 said she appreciated the quietness of home more now she was away from it, while F2 said she saw her home quite differently, appreciating the greenness and prettiness after coming from a more urban environment. In contrast, the campus has given F3 a different perspective on her home environment:

“There’s nothing there, just pawn shops and second-hand shops”. (F3)

Clearly, in this case, the attractive features and facilities of the campus have caused her to look at her home in a more critical way, suggesting that place attachment and place meaning in relation to the college have been increasing during her time at university. M1 saw home in

relation to the campus, which he regarded as an extension of his home environment – for him a positive affirmation of the value of being on campus. F4’s view of her Pembrokeshire home was unchanged – that it was a special place in

“a very special part of the country”, (F4)

a standpoint that contrasts, perhaps, with the views of the two campus-based students F1 and F2.

While on campus, some students have been involved in volunteering work. F1 has just started helping out in a local Brownies group, while F2, although not involved in work in Carmarthen, has contributed to teaching children in a performing arts group in her home town, an experience which has led to her making many friends. F3 has been involved in youth work and working in the mental health field in the Llanelli area, which has led to her making friends. M1 has been working with Communities First in the Carmarthen area, work which has been linked to his course which he has seen as

“a really good opportunity”, (M1)

making friends and getting on well with the participants. F4’s work with a gymnastics club near her home has led to new acquaintances and a better understanding of managing people, and

“has become a huge part of our life”. (F4)

She noted that if they did not attend the club then it was

“a huge gap in our lives.” (F4)

The links and friendships that these students are forming suggest that Putnam’s (2001) concepts of bonding and bridging capital are operating in this context. Bradley *et al* (2009)

suggest that the development of community links enhances social capital and is also strengthened by a strong sense of place, a connection which can be discerned from these students' comments.

4.9. Conclusion

The main statistical findings were that place attachment increased, and place meaning showed a small rise, while the importance of 'Welshness' and the strength of family ties were highlighted. Social capital levels did not vary greatly. However, the small scale of the study calls for caution in the interpretation of the results. These findings were supported by the quantitative results and endorse Casey's (2001) contention that there is no self without place and no place without self.

5. CONCLUSION

With such a wide-ranging study, it was inevitably going to be difficult to detect clear trends across the whole of the project, but nevertheless it is possible to abstract certain results which confirm the original premises of the exercise. Affective bonds have developed over the period students have spent on campus and it is suggested that attachment to place has reinforced identity. While it had been suggested that a relationship to a local place could be regarded as an important priority, some results have shown a preference for personal over local place and mobility over fixity.

Place attachment has been shown to increase, even within such a short time scale, and place meaning, although the results were statistically insignificant, nevertheless showed a small upward trend, which indicates that, at the very least, the students' positive perceptions of place have not weakened. Place attachment results indicate that ties to place can be developed in a relatively short time and it is suggested that the intense experience, both academic and social, of embarking on the first year of a degree programme can have the effect of accelerating attachment. Students want to bond with their college compatriots and to develop ties to a place they may not have experienced before; for them, Relph's (1976) view of existential insideness clearly holds sway. This may be of some interest when considering both recruitment and retention within HE. *As the Higher Education Academy's 2012 report has shown, a significant minority of students consider withdrawing from study, with one of the main reasons being a feeling of isolation and not fitting in, or 'outsideness' and 'insideness' (Thomas, 2012, pg. 12; Relph, 1976).*

While social capital levels do not appear to have increased significantly overall, the short time scale of the study was unlikely to make a great deal of difference to levels of

volunteering and to engagement with community, both on campus and elsewhere. Nevertheless, there were small but significant upward movements in some of the results, indicating that social capital is operating positively for many of the participants. However, the study has thrown up some unexpected discoveries, specifically the popularity of nationhood as opposed to a more local relationship with place. The affirmation of 'Welshness' suggests that young people are looking for an identity that transcends the specificity of a local place but nevertheless involves an area that has sufficient unique characteristics and a coherent, easily visualised spatial conflation that makes it easy to relate to. Wales as a 'brand' is perhaps more easily recognisable today as a vibrant, culturally significant entity compared with its situation in most of the 20th Century. This attachment could be linked to renaissance of the Welsh language and the Europe-wide consolidation of national identity for countries which have formerly been subsumed into much bigger nation states that have attempted to suppress individual cultural identities. As Bechhofer and McCrone (2009, pg. 3) have shown, a large number of people in the UK no longer consider themselves British, and, particularly in Wales and Scotland, are prioritising their 'national' identity over their 'state' one. It may be interesting in future studies to look more closely at this issue of 'Welshness'.

Also, the importance of family appears, in some instances, to heavily outweigh such factors as place. While it would hardly be surprising for family to be rated so highly, given that human bonding can reasonably be expected to transcend situations such as attachment to place, nevertheless the low-placing of the home site in the ranking section of the survey was unexpected, but could be linked to the relative mobility of young students for whom place may not be the construct that defines them. Is globalisation fostering disengagement with place, as Massey (1993) has hinted, or it could be suggested that Flusty's (2004) view that

there is an increased attachment to local sites as a reaction to the conformity of globalisation is relevant. Certainly, the students who were interviewed spoke at length about a connection to place, both home and campus. These viewpoints reflect Seamon's (1979) suggestion that home is a place to withdraw from the world; home can be regarded as a metaphor for place in general. The interview responses in general produced vivid, subjective portraits of student experiences which allowed a holistic view to be taken of the findings overall.

5.1. Limitations of Study

Clearly these individual strands need more extensive research to understand more fully the relationship between the personal, place and identity, the findings of this study may be regarded as signposts that point the way to further avenues of exploration.

The small size of the sample makes it difficult to give too much weight to the variation in results noted in the T-tests and in the other questions. In the qualitative section, there were only five interviews, which although providing an invaluable narrative account, were inevitably limited in effect because of the small size of the sample. Nevertheless, these subjective accounts embellished the findings of the statistics. Also, only two disciplines were surveyed. It may be that arts, sports or science students would have responded differently. It is suggested that the survey could be extended over a much longer period of time: perhaps at the beginning and end of the traditional three-year course. It would also be instructive to compare more than one college. Results from a metropolitan, inner-city university could differ from a campus-based university set in parkland. Within UoW:TSD itself, there are three main campuses: in Swansea (a busy urban space), Carmarthen (a small market town) and the Oxbridge-modelled campus of leafy Lampeter. Analysing the results from these three very different sites could be very instructive. Also it would be interesting to know whether

the responses were affected by the age of the participants, it is possible there would be a different reaction from an older person who is perhaps more rooted in place.

Possibly there were too many sections in the survey, which meant it was difficult sometimes to discern patterns, although it is considered the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed certain results to be validated by the more subjective responses in the qualitative research.

5.2. Final Thoughts

In the end, place can be conceptualised in many guises, as a favourite spot in a room, as a refuge, as a social construction that reflects the personal, as a place on the map and as an affirmation of identity, whether local, national or international. We may range far and wide across a shrinking globe, but we will inevitably and inextricably be tied to our birth place, however much we strive to vitiate its effects. For the poet Dylan Thomas, place was a curse and a blessing. When he was at home in Wales, he wanted to be elsewhere; when away he wanted to be back in his home country (Ferris, 1989).

In terms of implications for the university and its students, it is interesting to note the importance attached to the ‘greenness’ of the Carmarthen campus and the peaceful nature of the site. Students clearly value the natural attributes of the site and, has been suggested, this has contributed to the development of place attachment and place meaning. Taking this into consideration, development plans for the university may need to consider retaining aspects such as trees and flowers, which have been providing a haven for wildlife. These campus features are valuable attributes that may heavily influence students when making choices over which university to come to. They may also ensure that during the students’ period at college,

the environment will contribute positively to their success, both academically and in terms of social interaction.

What this study has hinted at is the complex, interwoven network of routines that lead to expressions of place that can take many forms, what Seamon (1980) has referred to as ‘place-ballet’. It is suggested that for human beings to exist outside of place is inconceivable. Our place world defines us, moulds us and allows us to fulfil our human destiny: from birth to death, place matters. Perhaps there would be no more fitting way to conclude than to reflect on the words of T. S. Eliot (1942, Little Gidding):

*‘We shall not cease from exploration, and the end
Of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time’.*

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. Questionnaire

7.2. Interview Questions

Sense of Place survey interview

These interviews aim to deepen understanding of peoples' relation to place and what it means to them to be part of a community

***Sense of place:** The particular characteristics of place that individuals recognise which allow them to develop attachments to a specific site and create an identity based on the value of place.*

Questions:

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What does place mean to you?
3. Do you think your identity is linked to a sense of place?
4. What is your nationality?
5. Is nationality important to you? Y/N. Please explain
6. Could you list the places where you have lived, including your current location and favourite holiday destinations?
7. Which places are important to you and why?
8. How does the Carmarthen campus impact on your sense of place? Could you explain further?
9. Why did you choose the Carmarthen campus?
10. There are a number of open spaces around the campus. How do you use them?
11. Although we are close to town there are lots of flora and fauna on the campus. Have you noticed them? Y/N. What does this mean for you?
12. How has your relationship with the university changed in your time on campus?
13. Do you view your home town differently now you are at university?
14. Have you been involved in unpaid work in this area or elsewhere – what is your view of this?
15. Have you made new friends through this volunteering?

7.3. Notes on Campus Use

Observation –Carmarthen campus, September 25, 2013

Weather: fine and sunny

11.45am: Quad coffee bar: predictably, full of students.

Hen Goleg corridor: groups of students sitting on armchairs chatting.

Garden outside Hen Goleg: small groups of students moving through the garden, some sitting on benches or going to halls. Some older students renewing acquaintance with old friends.

Most students seem to be orientating themselves with regard to where college facilities are.

Halliwell Theatre: Groups of students congregating outside taking a break from introductory talks. Some students are inspecting maps of the campus.

Garden next to theatre deserted – the long wet grass may be off-putting.

Outside the students' union groups are passing by, either coming from or going to the union.

The pond area and sensory garden are deserted.

Some students walking through the grounds past the pond.

Students walking from student services in small groups. One group of students is asking directions.

There is constant movement as they familiarise themselves with the environment, not much relaxing on benches/grass etc.

Outside Reception groups of students are moving from there across campus.

12.45: Groups coming out of Halliwell, chatting and deciding what to do next. Many of the groupings appear to be single sex.

Groups of staff and students are sitting outside Merlin restaurant. Later in the lunch period, students sit on the steps outside the theatre, chatting. Some students are chatting in driveway.

1.15: Groups outside Reception entrance.

Groups sitting on first floor of balcony of Union building.

Large group standing outside Non Tower.

On the wall next to the pond garden, a large group of students are chatting, more interested in networking than enjoying the beauty of the campus.

1.45: Much quieter all over campus.

Quad computer area full of students chatting and using computers, some for social networking.

2.05: Groups of students chatting inside SU building.

2.15: Quad coffee bar still very busy.