

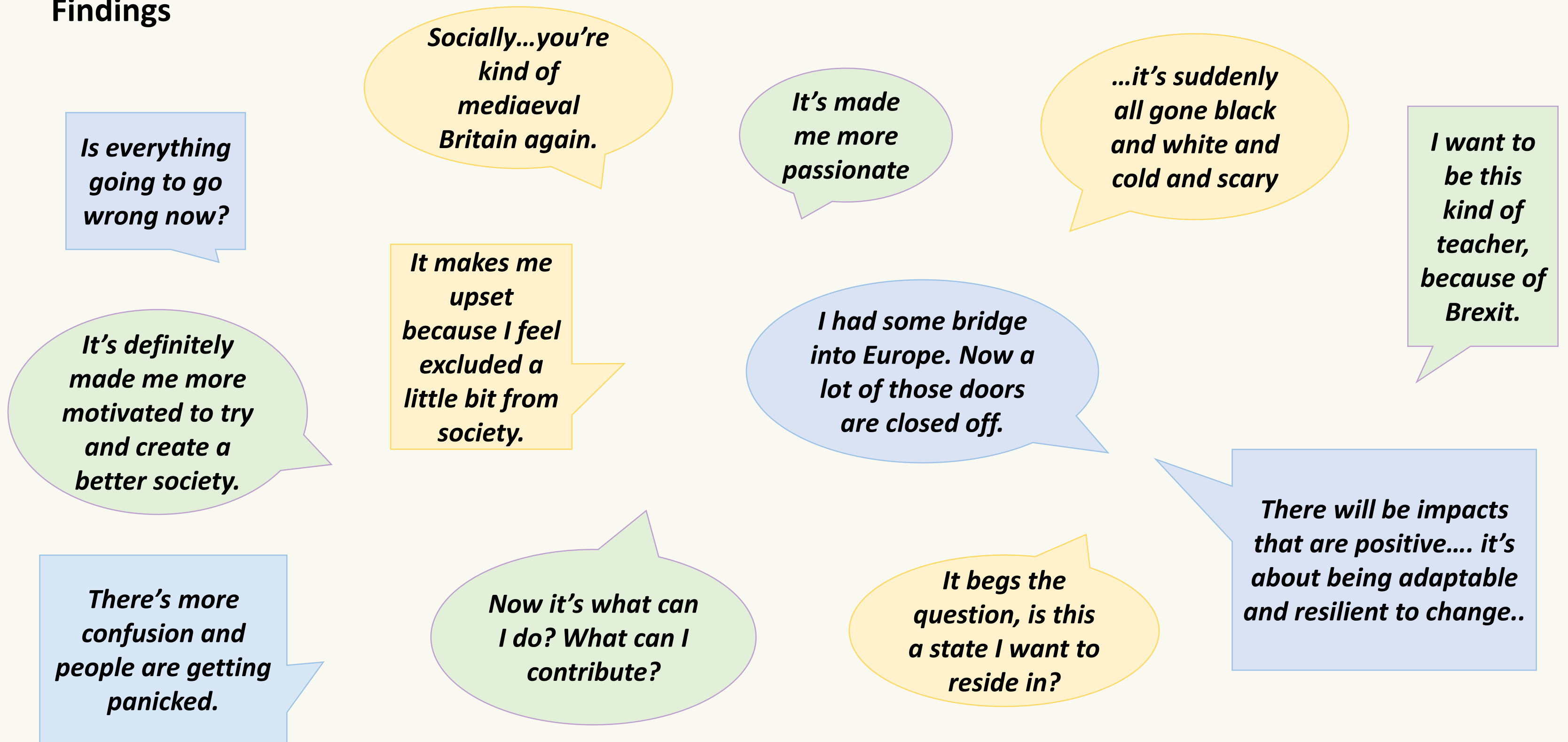
# How has the vote for Brexit impacted upon the career aspirations and career decision-making of UK undergraduates?

## Why undertake this study?

The impact of Brexit on the UK labour market is not yet clear (IES, 2017; BBC News 2018). Large scale surveys of UK undergraduates suggest that most believe it will be harder to find graduate employment and it will no longer be possible to work or study in Europe (Trendence UK, 2017; UK Graduate Careers Survey, 2017). But finding employment is only part of the picture.

Post-Brexit Britain is seeing inequality deepening, and social mobility remains a dream for many. If *some graduates are equal, but some are more equal than others*, is it time to revisit the ideological basis of our career practice so that these "next generation" graduates are ready to achieve not just a graduate job, but a fulfilling and meaningful career and life?

## Findings



## Research Questions

How do final year UK domestic students view their options for future employment and further study, during a time of political uncertainty?

How has students' decision-making been impacted by the Brexit vote?

## Research Design

Qualitative, semi-structured, digitally recorded interviews with 15 final year students, from a cross-section of courses, at UWE, Bristol. Participants were identified through opportunistic sampling. Research ethics approval was obtained from UWS and UWE. Interview transcripts were analysed using a thematic analysis approach.

## Conclusions

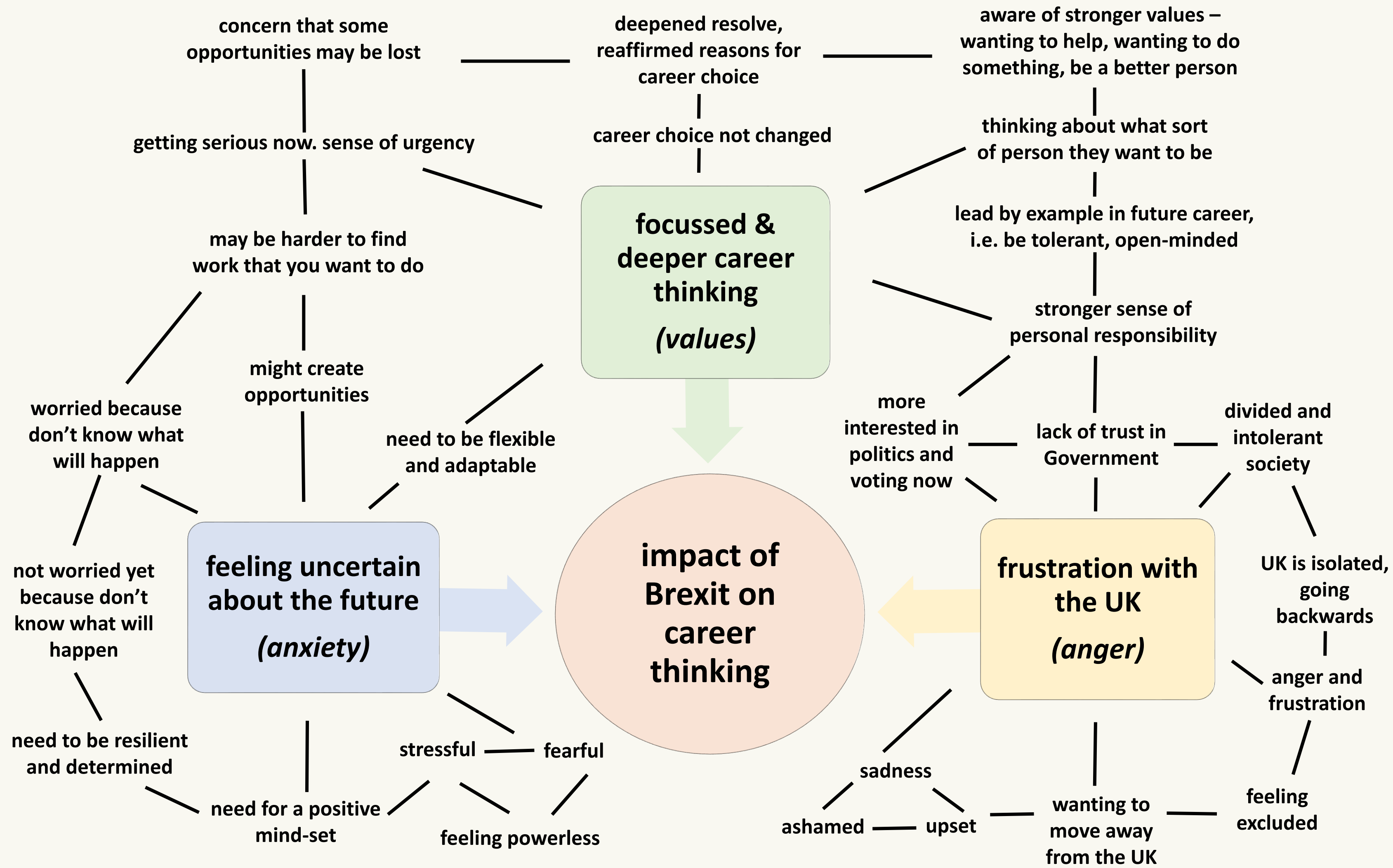
Values and emotion featured strongly in the interviews, and seemed to play a role in motivating the participants' career aspirations to have a life, a career, with purpose and meaning. The uncertainty expressed by many was balanced by some optimism, accepting a need for adaptability.

The findings from this small scale, qualitative study show the impact of the wider world we live in, including the impact of political events, on potential career choice.

## References

BBC News (2018) [Brexit: Official forecasts suggests economies throughout the UK will be hit](#)  
 High Fliers Research (2017) [UK Graduate Careers Survey 2017](#)  
 Institute for Employment Studies (2017) [Brexit Observatory Labour Market](#)  
 Trendence UK (2017), cited in Recruitment International (2017), [Graduate talent pool to get shallower as a third of UK international students reconsider staying and working in the UK](#)

## Thematic Analysis Mind Map (codes → concepts → themes)



## Implications for practice

A progressive and practicable approach to career guidance is needed, whereby values are embraced and the potential impact of social and political context is not ignored. An approach which is:

- One part psychological (e.g. *Who am I? What motivates me? What do I want to achieve in life?*);
- One part sociological (e.g. *What sort of society do I want to live in? What do I want to change? What is stopping me?*)

If we acknowledge that emotion plays a role in (career) decision-making, then there is a need to help our students manage their emotions, and for practitioners to develop a strong awareness of mental health issues.

Collaboration with university well-being services is needed, to provide staff training and rapid support for our students.

Submitted as part of Masters dissertation for the MSc Career Guidance & Development with the University of the West of Scotland

Research Supervisor: Dr. Marjorie McCrory