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International Student Mobility: An Analysis of European Union Student Post-Study Decisions and Sense of Belonging within the United Kingdom During the Time of Brexit

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This work is dedicated to my loving grandparents,

Lillian Campbell Wiggins

Bessie Pugh

Bobby Pugh

Abstract

23 June 2016 was momentous for the United Kingdom (UK): 51.9 percent of the population voted to leave the European Union (EU) partnership while 48.1 percent voted to remain (BBC News, 2016). This decision to exit, termed 'Brexit', sent jolts globally; shaking financial markets, challenging international mobility rights while concurrently re-igniting feelings of populism and nationalism discussions (Ford & Goodwin, 2017). The terms of the exit have yet to be set, however, issues of citizenship continue to dominate discussions while news reports in which EU citizens and Members of Parliament (MPs) becoming victims of harassment and hate crimes continue to flood the national and global media outlets (Peck, 2016; Weaver, 2018). As such, the UK higher education sector has responded with concern, hoping to mollify uncertainty for the 138, 000 EU students who arrive in the UK each year to take up courses (Ukcisa.org.uk, 2019). The pending impacts of Brexit have intensified recent debates concerning the future of EU and UK academic relationships as well as interrogated divisions between home and EU students; ultimately, these divisions are pushing EU students closer than ever to their non-EU international counterparts. Currently, residential, tuition and visa regimes among further longstanding legal, cultural and political connections offer EU students an advantage over their non-EU counterparts; however, despite these partnerships, EU students attending UK higher education institutions are still considered to be international students (Tannock, 2018). It is timely, then, to ask how current EU student's experiences, decisions and sense of belonging are faring during such an uncertain political and cultural climate within the UK (Prazeres, 2013).

This dissertation draws on an empirical mixed-methods approach to uncover how EU students enrolled at two UK universities, located in territories with very different orientations towards Brexit, University of Glasgow (Voter Remain Locale) and Swansea University (Voter Leave Locale), consider their sense of belonging and post study decisions. A thorough literature examination, paired with a subsequent online questionnaire and semi structured focus groups revealed, EU student's post-study decisions to be impacted by way of uncertainties surrounding future funding availabilities and university partnerships. Contemporaneously, EU students exhibited feelings their sense of belonging was being indirectly impacted, revealing the reluctance to engage in Brexit-based dialogue. This research argues that Brexit has impacted both political and cultural facets of the UK higher education sector; and with continuous xenophobic attitudes and tightening student immigration regimes, the UK is at a serious risk of losing the valuable contributions of international students.

Keywords: International Student Mobility, Belonging in Brexit, United Kingdom Higher Education Shifts, Brexit Impacts, Brexit Uncertainties

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I. Introduction

Overview and Context

Students are often considered to be an archetypal, mobile sub-set of the population (Prazeres, 2013). For a student, the transition into higher education has traditionally been thought of as a geographically mobile move, e.g. the transition from secondary schooling into higher education institutions and universities (Holdsworth, 2009; Finn, 2017; Finn and Holton, 2019). Recent UK student mobility literature indicates that domicile students are increasingly choosing to remain within their family or own home during higher education (Donnelly and Gamsu, 2018; Finn and Holton, 2019); however, on a global level, student mobilities have increased dramatically in the last 50 years though both short term or diploma earning programmes (Lomer, 2018). There is a plethora of motivations behind a student's choice to fulfil their educational achievements outside of their home country comfort zone: academic recognition, economic benefits, identity breakthroughs, international exposure, career benefits or language learning (Salisbury et al., 2008; Brooks and Waters, 2009; Prazeres, 2016); most literature extensively highlights these motivations and geographical patterns of international student mobilities. Despite this, there continues to be a lack of conversation regarding the correlation between student identity and belonging within these international mobility trends. Students of European higher institutions have operated with roles of significant differences than that of their early-20th century predecessors. Yet, very little within research surrounding shifting student identities attempts to discuss a student's own perceptions of their roles in higher education (Brooks, 2018) and focuses primarily of outside observations. Additionally, as Brooks (2018) emphasizes, an international student's role within higher education is and has been changing, further capitalizing on the complexity of current student mobility trends while linking these to the post-study choices for students. For most mobile students, the post-study transition has often included the possibility of remaining in their host country for an extended period of time in order to capitalize and further career opportunities. This sociological and political examination of international student mobility (ISM) within the changing UK attempts to determine if and to what extent these political shifts are affecting EU students. As the UK's traditional and notable higher education institutions attract millions of students yearly, it is imperative to examine the mobility opportunities and future accesses provided for EU international students. Listed chronologically below are the study's aim and objectives that outline the holistic approach in uncovering EU student's role within current UK ISM conversations.

Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to consider the extent to which the unfolding context of Brexit is impacting UK enrolled EU student's sense of belonging and post-graduation decisions. The following objectives underpin this broader aim:

- ✓ Discover if and how Brexit is impacting UK University- enrolled EU student's post-study decisions

- ✓ Identify the extent to which the Brexit negotiations are impacting EU student's sense of belonging
- ✓ Compare if opposing Brexit vote UK territories (Leave or Remain) create different belonging environments for EU students

In order to meet the aim and objectives, the following study undertakes a mixed-methods empirical research approach with two higher education institutions located in the UK, each representing a Brexit remain and leave voter locale: the University of Glasgow (Brexit Voter Territory: Remain) and Swansea University (Brexit Voter Territory: Leave). The details of the methods utilised to achieve the objective research aim and objectives is summarized below and densely discussed in Chapter 3.

Initially this research comes in the form of an online questionnaire to which subsequently includes a self-referral for EU students (participants) to then take part in a semi-structured focus group interview. As the research is influenced by the voices and opinions of EU students currently studying within the UK higher education sector, it attempts to clarify the internal uncertainties and bring to light the realities of shifting UK outlooks and policies. During the entirety of this research the complex topic of Brexit was lively debated and discussed, therefore the research processes and findings were reported based on the literature and information released at the time of the study. The following chapters in this dissertation will detail the theoretical concepts, valuable literature, processes, discoveries and conclusions that influenced this mixed method study. Provided below is a summary of the aim of each chapter for further reference and referral. With reliable knowledge and perspective and consistent positive and open communication, ISM conversations can only continue to flourish.

Chapter Summaries

II. Literature Review

This chapter provides a literature-based perspective into the subjects of ISM, student roles within UK higher education, UK student immigration policies, the transition from education to job markets and international student sense of belonging. These topics aim to deliver a holistic examination of current ISM debates and discussions through authors as Brooks, Prazeres, Finn, Findley, Ranata and Nancheva, and May. Each of these voices and more, introduce current theoretical concepts and unique perspectives into the field of international student belonging and mobility and space for this research contribute to. The purpose of this chapter is to offer the reader with background and knowledge of the above listed subjects as framework to recognize the validity this research as well as highlight the literature and theories that influenced research analyses.

III. Methodology

This chapter offers a detailed outline and justification of this social science research study. It includes a discussion on the theoretical paradigm of critical realism of which the research process of this study is inspired from as well as a detailed discussion into the data collection processes, limitations and analysis methods used in order to meet the intended aim and

objectives. The methods and theories explained throughout this chapter, provides this research with a tangible structure for which the current discourses existing within UK ISM can be uncovered.

IV. Research Outcomes

This chapter provides a discussion on the emerging themes and outcomes discovered through the study's research tools: funding ambiguity, lack of clarity, comfort zone and avoiding conversations. An online questionnaire was circulated to EU students of University of Glasgow and Swansea University, and statistically analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS); succeeding this analysis, focus group interviews with University of Glasgow EU students were coded and themed. Finally, these outcomes were synthesized with the literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this study. The data was gathered in explanatory sequential design and reported under the two sub-sections based on the aim of this research: sense of belonging and post-study decisions.

V. Conclusions

This chapter reviews the research aim, objectives and engages in final thoughts in relation to the field of ISM during a changing UK. It provides further learnings, limitations, recommendations and contributions for future studies.

II. Literature Review

Introduction

Britain's 2016 decision to exit the EU globally re-ignited conversations of populism and nationalism, shook financial markets, mobility rights and challenged international integration (Ford & Matthew, 2017). Specifically, the higher education sector has responded with concern for EU/UK uncertain student, staff and institutional future relations (UKCISA, 2017). According to Peak (2014) the number of students crossing international borders to study in higher education has increased by over 150% in the last 18 years, whereas the UK has kept a strong, notable place within this global student mobility growth (Prazeres and Findlay, 2018). ISM figures have seen great shift within the UK, with the OECD (2015) declaring the nation to have an incredibly high ratio of international vs domestic students. Similarly, Universities UK International (2017) established 12.5% of the student mobility population are enrolled in UK higher education systems, naming the UK 'the second largest destination' for international study. When considering the category of international students enrolled in UK higher education systems, those of EU citizenship are clearly international as they often have limited understanding of the UK education system and are frequently raised in unlike cultures, societal structures and with different languages (Tannock, 2018). Nonetheless, due to EU agreements, EU students are granted a certain equal level of admittance of UK domicile students through residency options and labour market accesses. Similar tuition fees, working rights, living expenses and policy-based legal permissions for mobility are among these accesses (Mindus, 2017; Gov.uk, 2019). In the UK higher education sector EU students make up 0.14 million of the 2.34 million student population and bring economic and social values and contributions to the British nation (Universities UK, 2017). Through the progressed tightening of UK international student policy vis-a-vis visa restrictions and fees, tuition increases, language requirements and boarder control procedures interwoven with the nation's overall public uncooperative moods towards immigration, EU students have begun to question their futures and identity within the UK (Dennis, 2016 ; Ranta and Nancheva, 2018). The following sections discuss current EU standings, historic and current UK policy, student roles within higher education, belonging and the post-graduation transition in order to illuminate these social and political discourses Brexit is imposing.

EU Student Citizenship and Erasmus+:

Mindus (2017) derives that the concept of 'European Citizenship' was first introduced by European Law in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 and has a special character status providing political accesses to which non-EU international counterparts work tirelessly to receive. Under the citizenship, free and continuum mobility, work permissions, low tuition accesses, housing permissions and almost no-restrictive day to day living give students an almost seemingly simple opportunity to move, study and eventually work (if wanted) to EU member countries. Notably, the values of the EU share the assumptions that all of its member citizens are equal, regardless of nationality, in the face of EU law; the purpose of the agreement is to grant all citizens the ability to enjoy equally the rights of the Union, naming 'European' as the primary nationality of all of its members (Biesta, 2009). These non-discriminative ways of introducing transnationalism are a

way to unite and better enhance EU treaties, partnerships and agreements. One of the most distinguished and admired political and educational breakthroughs that evolved out of EU agreements is the Erasmus programme, currently known as Erasmus+.

In its origins, the foundations of Erasmus+ were based on joint study programmes between universities to both build European university partnerships and enhance student experiences (Jones, 2017). The programme was kick-started in 1976 by the European Ministers of Education and in 1987 developed into a fully-fledged programme backed politically, socially and financially by the EU. Currently, the programme has developed further into what is known as Erasmus+ which involves European collaborations¹ in fields of education, training, youth and sport with aims of improving socio-economic changes in Europe. Notably, it attempts to foster integration and cohesive societies, enhance intercultural sense of belonging, fight unemployment, improve social capitals and support lifelong learning initiatives (European Commission, 2019a). As well as offering placement within partnering stakeholders, an array of funding opportunities is available for participants to acquire, through both the EU and partnering investors. The UK National Agency for Erasmus+ is made up of the British Council² and Ecorys UK³ who collaboratively work to manage all participants, funding and programmes within UK borders. Between 2014 and 2018, the Erasmus+ programme sent 128,092 participants to the UK, supported 4,846 UK based research projects and has been responsible for the funding of 679.7million euros towards student tuitions and experiences within the nation (Erasmus+, 2019); yet the terms of Brexit has the ability to impact these numbers heavily. The impending results of the changing EU-UK partnerships could not only directly affect the thousands of students who are in the midst of their on-going projects but defer or prevent European partnerships in the future. The central motivations of the Erasmus+ programme are to encourage international integration and improve socio-economic societies, but with UK's exit from the EU approaching, the nation runs the risk of communicating anti-inclusive attitudes, confusion and uncertainties.

Specifically, the Erasmus+ programme has responded by releasing statements directly addressing their consciousness of the impending uncertainties and communicating any arising information available, to all involved associates, from applicants to beneficiaries (Erasmus+.org.uk, 2019). The UK Home Office has released contingency regulations to maximize confidence in participants and applicants through 2020, yet has declared in the case of the UK leaving the EU with a no-deal, EU funding for Erasmus+ and associating projects may no longer be guaranteed (European Commission, 2019b; Gov.uk, 2019). This lack of clarity continues to dominate futures and potentially disrupt intercultural social and economic partnerships as that of Erasmus+.

As of current, the UK and EU agreed to the extension of Article 50⁴ and the contentions and outcomes of the Brexit vote are not clarified. As such, concerns surrounding uncertain futures

¹ The programme has now grown to collaborate with non-EU countries

² This sector of the UK National Agency is responsible for schools and higher education

³ This sector of the UK National Agency is responsible for adult and vocational education and training

⁴ Article 50 of the Treaty of the European Union states that any member may withdraw from the EU based on their own countries' requirements. As of March 2019, the EU has granted the UK an extension of this article until October of that same year.

continue to arise of all involved Erasmus+ participants and UK/EU citizens (Pearce, 2016; Kirkland, 2017; Highman, 2018); but while the Erasmus organisation acknowledges these concerns, unfortunately the details of the direct impacts cannot be addressed until the outcomes of the UK's exit process are clearly communicated.

Although Brexit voter opinions continue to operate under varying perspectives, primarily they consider the UK nationality prime within the constraints of their borders. This, consequently, has and continues to interrupt the fluid, intra-European mobilities and European citizenship principles, set in place by EU agreements. Further, it enforces the idea of othering between nationalities, introducing further discourses in positioning, identity and belonging. Although currently topical, these immigration outlooks are not new for British citizens. The following section will further detail trends and significant moments, both past and present, specifically in relation to UK international student mobility as a way to frame and offer a deeper explanation of the signposts that led to the momentous political shift which is Brexit in the hopes of explaining Brexit's significant impacts on ISM. Further, the chapter will bond these ISM moments with current student roles in UK higher education as recently education and politics are uniting in policy and influence. Finally, the chapter will complete with a discussion on the issues the Brexit vote has introduced for EU students' future belonging and post-study plans positioning.

New Labour and the Blair Years: A Brief History of International Student Mobility and UK Immigration Policies

This section overviews ISM in the context of UK policies and outlooks to provide a clear timeline, linking the EU's initial agreements with current political and social standings.

In 1999, Prime Minister (PM) Tony Blair opened discussion around increasing student mobility to the UK by introducing a series of targets and proposals in order to capitalize on the valued political, financial and cultural benefits of international students (PMI 1). Furthermore, he recognised the UK's imperial past generated a global reputation for higher-quality education and therefore took strong steps to increase the country's attractiveness for overall student destination distinction. With these concepts in mind, he designed a Prime Minister Initiative (PMI) for International Education, that which involved significant policy shifts and pro student immigration discussions within the UK (Blair, 1999; The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2006). Blair recognized the benefits of ISM being: the increased economic benefits of overseas students contributions to overall higher institutions (e.g. higher tuition and mobility fees), attracting global 'top' students served to maintain the quality of UK education and research reputations, as well as furtherly he recognized by establishing a longer-term influence with foreign students, who were expected to become future political, business and research leaders, enriched the UK's 'soft power' in the global market (Geddie, 2014).

Then again in 2006, Blair deepened these ISM discussions by introducing a second PMI on international education, with the central goals being: to continue to communicate the marketable social and economic benefits of global partnerships through mobile students and concentrate on the enhancement of cultural student experiences in the UK through short term programmes and creating post-study schemes and opportunities for international students (The Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2006). He truly believed non-UK students enrolled in UK

universities would leave with a higher trust in and willingness to negotiate with the UK; thus offering the nation opportunity to receive unofficial ambassadors and advocates to not only better communicate national values but ensure, through individual reinforcement, the UK's global reputation (Geddie, 2014; Lomer, 2018). In order to accomplish these intended aims, Blair continued to support the increase of UK higher education marketable benefits by emphasizing a student's post-graduation global employability potentials and opportunities for English-language improvement. Through work with non-governmental agencies to target student's quality of experience, the Blair initiatives increased support and participation in the ongoing creation of the European Higher Education and Research Area⁵(Council of Europe, 2019).

During this period of international student initiatives, Blair also began a fundamental reorientation of UK student mobility policies by adhering to and introducing structures of educational-based programmes as the Erasmus Schemes⁶, the Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme (SEGS)⁷, The Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme⁸ and the International Graduate Scheme (IGS)⁹; all of which provided outlets for students enrolled in UK higher education systems to legally remain in the UK during their transitional periods from study to the work-force. A central idea of all of these schemes were to give UK institution graduates space to establish themselves in the UK permanently or as a partner. Furthermore, these policies were meant to ensure UK education systems and the labour market offered strong competitions in the face of comparable initiatives in other major student-receiving countries as the likes of Canada, USA and Australia (Lomer, 2018). What is vital to recognize is at the roots of these PMI's are the positive conversations surrounding the contributions and attitudes on topics of cultural immersion, student mobility and immigration (Lomer, 2018). However, it is also crucial to recognise the progressive use of students and the education sector to achieve political aims.

While, positivity and encouraging outlooks on ISM primarily drove Blair and these political initiatives, with the changing of UK political powers and figures came a shift in perspective. Blinder (2011) determines immigrant outlooks are proven to highly effect British rule and policy shifts, as such this next section will link valuable context on the changes in immigration policy and outlooks, to the conservative-led British government which is currently in power.

⁵ The European Higher Education Area (EHEA), known also through the Bologna Process, is a politically inspired will of 48 countries in which negotiate and introduce higher education reforms built on common values to strengthen compatibility and qualification assurances.

⁶ This is EU's programme to support training and education in Europe and its primary aims include initiating and sustaining a development of partners within the higher education sector as well as contribute to both the Europe 2020 strategies and EU Youth Strategies.

⁷ The Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme (SEGS) was launched in 2004 and gave UK higher education institution graduates, in certain subject areas, availability to work within the UK a year.

⁸ Scotland's Fresh Talent Scheme was officially launched as part of a Fresh Talent Initiative in 2005 and allowed successful graduates of Scottish education institutions the permits to stay and work in Scotland for two years after studies are complete. This scheme ended in 2008.

⁹ The International Graduate Scheme (IGS) superseded SEGS and was a response to the Scotland-based Fresh Talent Scheme in which permitted non- European Economic Area students the right to remain in the UK up to a year after completing their studies.

Changing of the (Border) Guard: The Conservative-led UK Government and the Path to Brexit

In the early 2000's, immigration and international student outlooks within the UK took a sharp turn. The spark of these moods can be most recently traced back to PM Tony Blair's 2003 decision to not impose restrictions on the migration of EU nationals from the A8 states that were meant to join the EU in 2004. In 2003, immigration to UK was highly attractive as the nation was in a position of higher unemployment and a stable financial market, therefore upon the lack of impositions against the EU's A8 countries began a flood of new migrants to the UK, in much higher numbers than originally predicted by the home office and British government figures (Ford and Goodwin, 2017). Immigration restrictions, already a growing topic of issue in the UK during this period, rose to the top of British political agendas (Blinder, 2011). Anxiety erupted. As such, when the conservative party rose to power in 2010, the topic of immigration was at the top of their conversations, which furtherly fed feelings of British nationalism and opposition of migrants to the nation. For international students moving to the UK, this transition became a significant period as the initiatives to increase student mobility set in place by Blair started to unravel and policies began to tighten.

The Conservative Party-led Coalition Government began honing-in on issues around the 'out of control immigration' into the UK (Green, 2010; Lomer, 2018) and is said to have been 'remarkably restrictive' and 'at times both hyperbolic and hyperactive' (Partos and Bale, 2015, pg. 170). The political and economic values of ISM were specifically called upon by the party, primarily in scrutinization, within bigger discussions of negative immigration agendas leading to extreme tightening of visa schemes and sponsorship processes (Prazeres and Findlay, 2017). Furthermore, the 2012 English higher education reform¹⁰ and the London Metropolitan scandal¹¹ transpired, furtherly promoting anti-international outlooks that continued to intertwine public power through policy with the UK higher education sector (Chowdry et al., 2012; Brown, 2013; McGettigan, 2013; Geven, 2015). These reforms in UK ISM policy and investigations into mobile student population accesses, established restrictive and unenthusiastic moods of international students, still operating within the UK today.

Amber Rudd, UK's Home Secretary from 2016-2018, reiterated these negative immigration led-policy changes in her speech at the Conservative Party Conference slating "the current system allows all students, irrespective of their talents and the university's quality, favorable employment prospects when they stop studying" and confirmed that future plans to control immigration will also control international student mobility (BBC, 2016 as cited in Prazeres and Findlay, 2017, pg. 11). The increased substantial tightening policies and the Conservative's framework for igniting negative immigration discussions came to a head in 2016 when British voters supported in favor to leave the EU. This vote shook the global community

¹⁰The 2012 UK English reforms set out to (1) increase higher education tuition fees, (2) redirect public subsidies to students rather than Universities (3) loosen student enrollment requirements

¹¹ In 2012 the UK Home Office revoked the London Metropolitan University's visa sponsorship license and right to recruit international students as investigations proved a high majority of the international students attending the institution were not attending their programmes, did not have the correct legal permissions to remain in the UK and did not meet the necessary English language requirements.

overnight, adding confusion of the future of student mobility and migration as well as future funding and residential opportunities within the UK. Additionally, the vote intensified and tested discussions around senses of belonging and cultural inclusion for those EU nationals living within British borders (Mindus, 2017; Ranata and Nancheva, 2018).

At this point, students, specifically foreign students, had become a clear politically-driven tool to increase economic and social capitals (during the Blair years) and reinforce British nationalism (during the Cameron and conservative years) - but at what cost of the student?

Where the above section of this chapter enacted as a historical framework of UK student mobilities during significant political shifts shedding light on current ISM conditions and linking EU agreements with current political and social standings; this next section gives a framework of both the shifting role of the student in higher education and deeper conversation on international student belonging, identity and positioning within the global community.

Changing Roles of the Student

In Europe and in the UK, the role of higher education has increasingly shifted, becoming a source of achieving specific economic, political and social agendas at both union and national levels (Williams, 2013; Brooks, 2018). Higher education aims have become increasingly intertwined with political decisions. They are moving away from the original purposes of academic integration and are now shifting to capitalize on the knowledge economies of national states for profitable purposes (e.g. seen through Tony Blair's PMIs). As such, the role and perception of the student in higher education systems are likewise subsequently shifting.

Even before the UK's major unenthusiastic student mobility shifts, UK media, governmental figures, parents and even institutions had begun to measure the economic and social worth of potential students, considered 'products', in relation to the higher education sector (Williams, 2013). Currently, students are frequently viewing their education and attendance in higher education institutions as a consumer good or service; while the discourse between academic attendance for the sake of learning and the sake of product-motivated learning is said to be fundamentally altering core pedagogical relationships (Brooks, 2018). Further, Williams (2013) noted this strong opposition of the current student compared with early twenty first century counterparts – a individual highly and dedicated to studies. The stretching of university tuition fees, media representation and global pressures (Williams, 2013) have only increased the emergence of the shift in student identity, while the role of political associations is only deepening them. As such, students have begun to stray away from considering themselves as solely learners and have instead changed their motives to obtain higher corporate or political statuses primarily seeking an intended outcome (e.g. career status and workforce positioning) or having evidence to satisfy their consumer (e.g. diplomas, publications and certificates) (Molesworth, Nixon and Scullion, 2009). Students are increasingly positioned at the intersection between self, the state and various other collections of power that enable and constrain student's life choices (Roberston, 2013 cited in Moskal, 2016) Although this concept is not considered to be the identity of all (Tomlinson, 2016), the increasing behavior continues to reflect the choice of university for a student and has highly contributed to the growth of ISM and the importance of global partnerships. The Brexit vote and current international student restrictions undoubtably constrain and continue to test the

UK's future in a global educational world. Students continue to recognise this shift and are using these spaces to further their personal identities and aspirations.

Higher education settings and institutions have consistently been thought of as critical spaces for allowing students to develop political identities, encouraging them to think critically of themselves, their nations, and their identities in relation to one another (Crossley and Ibrahim, 2012; Loader et al. 2015; Olcese, Saunders and Tzavidis, 2014; Brooks, 2018). Contemporary European students are taking interests in politics and social issues, with recent examples of tuition increase protests, solidifying more professional University-based Unions and the Occupy movements. As higher education continues to be a space for students to flourish their ideas and positions, governments across Europe are divided in whether they choose to listen or be influenced by these actions. In Germany, students were able to successfully campaign their tuition fees in order to encourage free education (Muller and Rischke, 2014 as cited in Brooks, 2018) while UK student equivalents were unsuccessful in changing governmental opinions despite the student protests and insistent activities. Concurrently, in 2019 students and student Unions from a variety of UK universities (including Scottish and Welch Universities) have attempted to make their voices heard against UK's Brexit, calling for another referendum or likewise movements from parliament to stop the exit - all of which are questionable in their effectiveness (Cheung, 2019). Surveys and petitions are being circulated, but governmental procedures have little to no actionable acknowledgement from them. As EU students continue to cherish their ability to freely and critically evaluate their political positions at university, having the respect or response by the government, as that in the example of Germany, encourages further student initiatives and political participation. Klemencic (2014) suggests reasons behind UK governmental persistence in the face of student opposition continued due to the governmental belief UK higher institutions had not rejected the neo-liberal reforms, therefore students were being heard; where other European governments, as that of Germany, felt less able to push against anti-reform protests in favor of regarding student opinions. The lack of cooperation between the emerging global student positioning and restrictive UK political perspectives significantly impedes the nation from competing in the future global race. Furtherly, it has the ability to test inclusions and sense of belonging, putting the student and the governmental power in resistance with one another, instead of productively growing the partnerships and its possibilities.

Belonging and citizenship are key concepts in sociological, political and geographical research with student, with various definitions and interpretations of where student sit in debates about identity and experiences of higher education. Where this previous section gives explanatory power to the shifting relationships within higher education, the next section will link the likes of these relationships to the personal; as a means of framing the research aim and objectives of this study.

Sense of Belonging and Identity

Bo Strath under the argument of philosopher Charles Taylor encourages that humans are social, self-interpretive beings that organise their life by giving meanings to actions and institutions, stressing the importance of inclusion in social relations and environments (Delanty, Wodak and Jones, 2011). This examination of the development of self-identity has been extensively discussed by psychologists, sociologists and social scientists in a means of understanding the importance of the place and locale that fosters identity breakthroughs. More often than not, identity is often discussed in terms of *categories* (class, ethnicity) or through intersectional gender theories (Crenshaw, 1991) to which are used as a basis of defining a person and person's life. Within education research, belonging is often understood in the context of student retention and withdrawal rates (Tinto, 1975; Thomas, 2012) while more complex interpretations study which students can and cannot belong (usually tied to axes of inequality) (Read, Archer and Leathwood, 2003; Quinn, 2010). Additionally, there is a strong Bordieusian tradition of examining how and in what ways different local students might (not) fit in at university (Reay, Crozier and Clayton, 2010; Bathmaker et al., 2016). These tend to be studies of nationally domiciled and 'non-tradition' students, rather than ISM (Prazeres, 2013). Furthermore, it should be noted, questions of belonging explore, primarily, the dynamics between personal identity in the framework of social identities, not to be confused with studies of integration, in which focus on the external settlement and adapting processes (Ranata and Nancheva, 2018). As such, viewing the sense of self-identity through a lens of belonging and not through categories or integration, provides a different, personal, perspectives on the concept, deepening examinations of residence, social relationships and widening explanations of feelings of inclusion.

Ongoing conversations of the connection between self-identity and belonging introduces the likes of the theory of relational self, a guiding framework of this research. May (2013) suggests belonging is not only "a feeling of ease with one's self and one's social, cultural, relational and material contexts" but "acts as a kind of barometer for social change" (May, 2013, pg. 3). This definition of belonging operates under the suggestion that self is not something innate or born within us, but instead emerges in relation to the people, culture and societies we inhabit. Although this perspective of self is not the only functioning theory, in terms of the dialogues within this research during the unfolding contexts of Brexit for EU students, the theory operates as a concept that links the political and the social of ISM. Furthermore, the choice of viewing belonging through the theory of relational self was made deliberately as the theory fluidly highlights sense of identity as product of interactions and relationships, naturally embedded in the likes of higher education systems (Simmel, 1950; Elias, 2001; May, 2013; Brooks, 2018).

The 2016 Brexit vote both highlighted and challenged identity categories for EU students, questioning student and citizenship roles through shifting political and social contexts. It is clear the ramifications of the Brexit vote have resulted in more questions than answers for the future of the UK and the rest of the world (Bloom et al., 2018; Barnes, 2019); yet what can still be explored, and is explored in this research, is the personal effects these tightening regulations and lack of acceptance has on the future of UK ISM.

However, investigation of issues around belonging should not be solely put on UK feelings of nationalism but should also consider the point at which non-UK citizens make the choice to be included (Jones & Krzyanowski, 2011). Belonging is transient and 'highly contingent on changes

in the environment and time', therefore when considering EU student's mobility, it must be recognized belonging, though personal, is can be highly affected on the external (Ranata and Nancheva, 2018, pg. 3). Ranata and Nancheva (2018) studied the effects of belonging in both pre-referendum and post-referendum stages on EU nationals residing in the UK, concluding the vote caused a serious disruption and projected EU nationals consequently to have consolidated in groups based on their nationality, instead of integrating themselves within UK societies. Instead of enhancing intercultural relationships, as the initiatives of Blair (2006) only years before or current ISM programmes as the Erasmus+ scheme, aims to achieve, Brexit is continuing to create collected units and further communal isolations.

Furthermore, Brooks (2018) considers further higher education settings to have consistently been thought of as critical spaces for students to explore social and personal identities while providing space for them to think critically of themselves, their nations, and their identities in relation to one another. Operating under these ideas of belonging and the role of the modern university, finding belonging should be quite natural, but not within the way ISM motives aim to achieve. The following section continues this discussion through the lens of post-study decisions. When a student transitions from the safe spaces of university, they stand to lose their identity based within collectives, and in turn stand to lose the comfort of belonging. In the current UK, under the outlooks of Brexit, this transition becomes not only politically challenging (through tightening regulations), but challenging in regard to the personal, belonging and identity.

Post-Study Transitions

International students, both EU and non-EU have been named invaluable, bringing significant economic, social and cultural benefits to the UK. The impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU on young people weighs heavy, making the transition from education to employment significantly more difficult both personally and politically. Progressively, the loss of UK co-funding of EU programmes to support students in their education endeavors and transitions to employment will be devastating unless the UK government plans to contribute or plans to replace these accesses (Ellison, 2017).

In a post-Brexit 2016 survey, student recruitment consultant agency, Hobsons, reported that at least 30% of EU students alleged they would "not likely" consider the UK in their higher education study destinations where 6% said they "would definitely not" consider the country as a study destination as a result of the referendum (Ali, 2016). While, Universities UK (2019) reported for the 2016-2017 year, of the 2.32 million students studying UK higher education institutions 134,835 were of European Union (EU) member states, while international students (EU and non-EU) contribute 25.8 billion in gross output to the UK economy every year¹².

Although UK international student mobility numbers have been consistent since the vote, with UK universities rising prices and student immigration regulations continuing to tighten, these numbers could be at risk. Through these tightening policies and general unwelcome feelings of immigrants, the UK is facing pull away from its previous international student country contributors (Germany, rest of Europe) and relying on two central student countries (China and India) to support

¹² Statistics are based on the UK higher education 2015-2016 school year.

the economic benefits of an international student (She & Wotherspoon, 2013). As European students tend to stay in Europe for study (She & Wotherspoon, 2013), the negative immigration moods and ongoing Brexit negotiations in the UK have a high potential to dramatically affect future student's choices of international study and post-study decisions. Resultingly, affecting UK higher education research relationships, partnerships and imperial standings not to mention diverse cultural settings.

Additionally, international students often enroll in advanced research and study programmes in their host countries or utilise their education to advance into the workforce, establishing a firm contribution to these countries' cultures and economies (She & Wotherspoon, 2013). The UK Home Office highly regulates international student intake through extensive financial checks to determine the work proficiency and language skills, as both favorably contribute and influence the labour market, suggesting further aims of capitalizing on intercultural relationships (She & Wotherspoon, 2013); but with EU (and non-EU) numbers at risk of decreasing as a result of unfavorable student migrant outlooks, the valuable skills brought to the nation likewise decreases.

Organisations such as Universities UK, have challenged the UK government to use this shifting political position as an opportunity to re-think and devise policies to maximize the benefits for both international students and UK citizens to not lose the value and diversity of international students. While the UK continues to tighten and go away with policies, other countries are becoming more motivated to attract international students by introducing new policies and regulations. Competition within the higher education sector rising in countries as of France, Germany and Australia, with each of these countries adding ISM post-study political schemes to increase intake (Lomer, 2018). The UK has a unique opportunity, through the Brexit outcomes, to promote their noteworthy higher education institutions in a more inclusive way than of recent years, but will the government respond?

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the changing ISM policies in the UK, discussed significant shifts within the roles a student, explored EU student citizenship and clarified the necessary theoretical belonging and post-study positions of EU students in UK higher education. The following section will detail the mixed-method study conducted that aimed to consider the extent to which the unfolding context of Brexit is impacting UK enrolled EU student's sense of belonging and post-graduation decisions.

III. Methodology

Introduction

Chapter 2 identified a gap in existing ISM research, in that it proved the need to further unpack EU student's personal sense of belonging and post-study positioning within a changing UK. In order to examine this issue, the following objectives should be addressed:

✓	Explore if and how the Brexit is impacting UK University-enrolled EU student's post-career decisions
✓	Discover the extent to which the Brexit negotiations are impacting student's sense of belonging within UK communities
✓	To consider if and how different voting intentions (Leave or Remain) create different belonging environments for EU students

Therefore, this study examined EU students who are currently attending two UK higher education institutions, each positioned in opposing Brexit voter territories: The University of Glasgow (located in Glasgow, Scotland, Brexit Vote: Remain) and Swansea University (located in Swansea, Wales, Brexit Vote: Leave). The research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach in an explanatory sequential design, whereas an initial online questionnaire was distributed that included a self-referral to attend a semi-structured focus group discussion.

As a way to frame this empirical research study, the chapter opens with a brief view into the roots of positivism and interpretivism, followed by a detailed explanatory discussion on the mixed-methods paradigm of critical realism. From there, the chapter details the processes, strategies and choices adopted to meet this study's intended aim and objectives and establish a framework for data synthesis and analysis. Finally, the chapter concludes with insight into the limitations that arose during the study.

Social Science Paradigms: Investigation of Positivism, Interpretivism and Critical Realist Perspectives

Positivism and Interpretivism:

The roots of social science research and practices can be dated back to the 17th and 18th centuries to what is known as the age of reason, or the age of enlightenment. Europe, during this period, was a time of intellectual and philosophical discovery, interwoven with movements that dominated the world in the areas of politics, philosophy, sciences and communications. The emphasis on discovery that blossomed from this period, defined the roots of the current social science studies of ontology and epistemology. Ontology considers the nature of reality and being, while epistemology is the study of knowledge within realities (Opie, 2004; Raadschelders, 2011); of these divisions, epistemology lies at the heart of social science research and therefore lies at the heart of this research study.

From this epistemological practice emerged two ways of gathering, analysing and conducting research, known as positivism and interpretivism. Positivist ideas suggest the foundations of understanding human realities are demonstrated predominantly through the use of scientific tools and proved through specific, statistical based results (Hasan, 2014). This theoretical position defines what is known as the quantitative approach, which uses detachment methods of gathering and conducting research which produce numerical results and commonly focus on specific variables within a research field or area (Denscombe, 2014).

In the mid-twentieth century, philosophical stances introduced an alternative approach to positivism, known as interpretivism. Interpretivism considers the collection and analysis processes of research should be humanistic-driven, using physically involved tools in the research processes, opposed to scientific and statistically based instruments. This theoretical position is associated with model of qualitative approaches of conducting research; as opposed to quantitative methods, interpretivists or qualitative researchers believe the use more personal tools to obtain and analyse data creates a humanitarian perspective to research, with results commonly represented through visuals and words (Denscombe, 2014).

This study incorporates both the quantitative (positivist) and qualitative (interpretivist) approaches, properly known as a mixed-methods research approach; the combination of both positivist and interpretivist methodologies attempt to collect and evaluate data in regard to both the natural and social worlds. Formally, the paradigm critical realism achieves this attempt: combining the philosophy of science with the philosophy of the social world. As the fundamental root of this research is socially-driven and inquires on statistical evidence and humanistic tools of evaluating findings, the entirety of the data processes operated under the paradigm of critical realism.

Critical Realism:

Critical realism incorporates both positivist and interpretivist outlooks on a socially-driven subject (Ghiara, 2019). This study deeply inquiries into the cultures, persons and societal structures of the UK higher education sector for and in concern with the future of international students, specifically EU students. The vibrations of the UK's ISM political and social stances situated within the context of Brexit, shed light on rooted social issues that are now translating into the wider social science fields of human geography, migration and sociological inclusion. Therefore, it necessary to frame this research within a structure that incorporates both social perspectives and natural perspectives as well. Critical realism is not an easily defined paradigm, however; instead it can be better thought of as a foundation that both positivists and interpretivist can draw from in order to explain their research (Archer et al. 2016). Critical realism is sometimes also defined as a metatheory and draws upon four key structures in order to improve data collection processes: ontological realism, epistemic relativism, judgmental rationality, and ethical naturalism; each of these structures collaborate to provide a grounding for mixed-method empirical research (Archer et al. 2016).

Archer et al. (2016) establishes the concepts of the four key structures of critical realism: (1) ontological realism suggests that reality operates independently of our knowledge and therefore does not fully answer to positivist methods of empirical research. Ontological realism

combines both rationalisation and analysis to investigate cultures, social structures and the effects interaction and communication has on them. (2) Epistemic relativism is the knowledge we use that establishes and articulates the investigations into our reality; it suggests our knowledge is historically, socially and culturally situated and therefore so are our representations of the world. This concept is significant when conducting research as it acts as a reminder to both researcher and cohorts that knowledge is closely associated with the matter of perspective. (3) Judgmental rationality reaffirms these concepts and suggestions there is a set standard to judge our accounts of the world; the central idea within judgmental rationality is the ability to decipher between credible models and means of investigation and research. Critical realists believe that it is possible for social science research to refine the realities of the world and make justifiable claims to improve knowledge, but in order to achieve this successfully, a standard is necessary. (4) Cautious ethical naturalism considers facts and values ultimately provide this standard. The metatheory of critical realism offers, through these four structures, a variety of facets and standards for undertaking and conducting research on current socially-driven social science phenomenon.

These critical realist perspectives were utilised to justify and provide shape to the research undertaken with EU students situated in the changing political and social UK. These decisions were deliberately made to establish a strong and valid foundation for this study's strategies, collection and analysis processes to follow. The next section of this chapter will now offer a complete look into these chosen research strategies and techniques.

Research Strategies and Data Analysis Processes (Methods and Motives)

Mixed-Methods Approach:

Bearing these theoretical concepts in mind, the proposal for this research integrates both quantitative and qualitative tools of data collection and analysis achieving a mixed-method approach to grasp, to a fuller extent, Brexit's impact on EU students. Clark and Ivankova (2016) suggest a mixed-method approach to research holistically explores a scenario to produce a stronger and more credible study by helping to minimize potential alternative explanations of the results and explain divergent aspects of the topic (pg. 10). This study's mixed-method research was formulated and performed in an explanatory sequential design format; this design format uses qualitative results to explain and provide a holistic interpretation of quantitative findings (Ghiara, 2019). When considering a mixed-method research approach, it is critical to assess the data collected in a quality manner with the following criteria: validity (research instruments measure as they are meant to measure), reliability (instrument utilized steadily measures the characteristic of interest), trustworthiness, and credibility (Hite, 2011). Traditionally, validity and reliability are used to assess quantitative data, while trustworthiness and credibility are used to assess qualitative data collections (Clark and Ivankova, 2016). Venkatesh, Brown and Sullivan (2016) advise that researchers should only utilize a mixed-method approach to research data collection when 'they intend to holistically explain a phenomenon for which extant research is fragmented, inconclusive, and/or equivocal' (pg. 437). Due to the extensive nature of the research as well as the uncertainties surrounding current Brexit outcomes, only providing a single approach will not justify a clear, trustworthy or credible response to this subject; nor will it encompass, the deeper ramifications Brexit is having on EU student's post-study plans and belonging.

Initially this research proposal sought to uncover student perspectives from four internationally present UK institutions, each representing one of the four regions that make up the UK as well as a varied Brexit voter locales: (1) University of Glasgow, (UK territory: Scotland, Brexit Vote: Remain) (2) Swansea University, (UK territory: Wales Brexit Vote: Leave) (3) Durham University, UK territory: England, Brexit Vote: Leave), and (4) Queens University, (UK territory: Northern Ireland, Brexit Vote: Remain). The rationale behind this choice was to achieve a geographic holistic view of EU studying student's place within regions that had strong negative and positive feelings towards Brexit. However, due to delays with University of Glasgow ethics and problematic accesses to Queens University and Durham University, the intended study changed. Further, due to an extended sick leave of the Swansea University gatekeeper and time permits for completion of this study, the online questionnaire was distributed in mid-June to participants from Swansea University, therefore a focus group was not achievable at this locale.

Therefore, the revised study incorporated two UK institutions, each representing an opposing Brexit voter locale: University of Glasgow, (UK territory: Scotland, Brexit Vote: Remain) (2) Swansea University, (UK territory: Wales Brexit Vote: Leave). Although a focus group was not possible at Swansea, the online questionnaire was able to represent Brexit leave (Swansea University) and remain (University of Glasgow) territories in order to succeed in the intention of uncovering varied perspectives of EU student's post-graduation plans and belonging during Brexit based on geographical regions. The participants of this research were selected based around the "clusters" or communities in which they reside, their universities' geographical regions and their EU nationality as such the sampling method chosen in this research was theoretical, purposive and cluster sampling (Curtis, Murphy and MacGinty, 2014). The study sampled both current undergraduate and post-graduate EU students enrolled in University of Glasgow and Swansea University for the duration of their higher education studies, with varied demographic backgrounds and disciplines of study.

The research tools used in this study were: (1) online questionnaire (quantitatively analysed) that which provided a self-directed question to partake in a (2) focus group (qualitatively analysed). Specifically, the online questionnaire was built using the University of Glasgow recommended survey tool, Jisc, that contained a total of twelve questions that are detailed in Appendix A. Curtis, Murphy and MacGinty (2014) name the limitations of utilising a questionnaire primarily have to do with response rates and narrow availability for in depth responses; while the benefits surround anonymity and range of participant accesses. With this in mind, this research questionnaire involved simple, only broad sweeping, multiple choice questions in hopes of receiving a higher responses rate. This research did not cap the number of questionnaire participants in order to allow a variety of perspectives to contribute to the research, yet it did aim receive one-hundred responses from each university to align with UKCISA (2018) student statistics. The survey totaled 264 responses, 184 from the University of Glasgow and 80 from Swansea University. The resulting data was assessed quantitatively through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), a University of Glasgow recommended form of data analysis. These questions contained demographic information, such as EU country of origin and field of study, as well as broad

sweeping questions honing-in the impacts (current and future) of Brexit for the students and student belonging inquiries. The aim of these questions was to provide my research with:

- ✓ Student Geographic Location within the UK
- ✓ Overall Attitudes Towards the UK in relation to Brexit
- ✓ How often EU students follow Brexit news
- ✓ Whether or not student post-graduation plans have changed as a result of Brexit
- ✓ To numerically grasp the extent to which Brexit is influencing UK isolation

Moreover, the online questionnaire contained a voluntary director question for participants to discuss their opinions and furthering perspectives in a semi-structured focus group. Curtis, Murphy and MacGinty (2014) suggests a focus group gives a variety of viewpoints as well as the space for participants to engage in and with critical thinking and analysis of the subject matter; while the limitations being group dynamics with possible results in untrustworthy responses, biases, and anonymity. Furthermore, Schumm, Sinagub and Vaughn (1996) believe an attribution of performing a focus group is “they extensively offer opportunities...to connect to their consumers’ perceptions and interests by attempting to ascertain what consumers think about specific products and issues” (pg.2-3). Burton, Brundrett and Jones (2008) suggest qualitative data analysis ‘is more open to ambiguity and requires the identification of emergent key themes’ therefore the researcher needs to ‘be alive’ for potential research patterns and categories (pg.147) For this reason, the focus group was organised, facilitated and analysed by the researcher. In order to allow for a timely, honest and productive discussions to arise, one-hour semi-structured focus groups, where forty-five minutes were dedicated to discussion sessions and fifteen minutes dedicated to filling in consent forms. It is suggested by Gibbs (2007) that focus groups containing six to ten participants allows for productive conversation and reduces the element of untrustworthy responses through group bias; for this reason, each group aimed to hold at least six participants. Semi-structured focus groups allow the conversation to flow naturally, while open ended questions provide space for participants to open up about the social and political topic without restriction (Schumm, Sinagub and Vaughn, 1996). A formal list of questions is detailed in Appendix B. Two focus groups were performed at the University of Glasgow, held in the University Library. The first had a total of six students evenly representing undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study and a wide mixture of nationalities, backgrounds and focuses; while the second had a total of two students, both of post-graduate level and varied nationalities, backgrounds and focuses. The data from these focus groups was analysed qualitatively through coding that further inspired and led to the development of big ideas and eventually thematic trends. The intended aim of the focus group was to:

- ✓ Deeply examine studying EU student’s sense of belonging in the UK during Brexit
- ✓ Discuss post-graduation plans and uncover trends if these were changing as a result of Brexit
- ✓ Uncover possible concerns EU students had due to Brexit
- ✓ Highlight trends in both belonging and post-graduation plans in concern with UK geographic territory

Ethics and Limitations of the Study

According to Denscombe (2014), data collection that involves or is about living individuals requires ethical scrutiny, for that reason this study required and received ethical approval from the University of Glasgow ethics committee. Brexit is an ongoing, highly polarized topic which involves sensitive subjects such as migration, immigration, citizenship and societal belonging; therefore, the nature of this research was deemed high risk¹³ and closely followed all University of Glasgow ethical guidelines. All participants were required to review a plain language statement, approved by the University of Glasgow ethics committee, and sign a consent form in order for their responses to be valid within this research. Further, focus group participants were reminded to respect one another's opinions, conversations and responses throughout the process and were free to exit if needed. The facilitator was constantly on alert for any distresses and had the necessary information to direct students to appropriate, helpful facilities post-discussion, if needed. In order to make all "participants feel confident in providing perspectives" (Curtis, Murphy and MacGinty, 2014, pg. 186), anonymity and confidentiality was thoroughly considered throughout each step of this research process. Therefore, the questionnaire was designed to only gather demographic data (all participants) and contained a voluntary self-referral question for those who wanted to partake in the focus groups, to provide their email addresses; throughout this process, only the researcher had access to this information. As anonymity is imperative for trustworthiness of participants and data analysis processes, no student information was used in the write-up of this study; additionally, to avoid any identifiers within the focus group conversations, no demographics were used in the write up portion. Further, a data management plan was put in place in coordination with the University of Glasgow IT data management team¹⁴ and establishes all participant personal information will be destroyed after the completion of this study¹⁵. All data gathered throughout this process was safely stored on University of Glasgow servers, with only the researcher having access to it; under University of Glasgow master's programme guidelines, the non-descriptive data will be stored for a maximum of ten years. Time commitment and financial restraints were minimal as the questionnaire was circulated online and focus groups were held on University of Glasgow campus.

Limitations arose throughout the study, primarily under the subheadings of accesses and the nature of Brexit. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, most access limitations were the result of university required administrative processes. These administrative requirements pushed the research timeline back two months, allowing the study to move forward during the exam and start of summer holiday periods at university. The physical lack of students on campuses and the mental fatigue could give clear explanation as to why my intended participant sample size was lower than originally intended. Furthermore, the topic of Brexit is one that has been forefront in the minds of EU and UK citizens for three years; and with changes of leadership and leave deadlines being extended throughout this process, a 'Brexit fatigue' has said to have arisen throughout Europe (Gore, 2019; McGee, 2019; Spence, 2019; Tan, 2019). This fatigue namely describes the British nation and EU counterparts' feelings of uncertainty and the desire for this transition period to end. A speech made by former Prime Minister Theresa May in March 2019 urged parliament to acknowledge that the population was tired of political games and that real

¹³ This high-risk recommendation was that of the University of Glasgow ethical committee.

¹⁴ A copy of this is stored on the University of Glasgow I drive.

¹⁵ Further guidelines and accesses to this documentation is detailed and is available, if required.

concerns such as student funding and National Health Services needed clearer answers for the future (BBC News, 2019a). This fatigue and lack of uncertainties surrounding the futures of the nations has caused a disconnect in the minds of people (Tan, 2019), and therefore a lack of engagement with the topic. Additionally, Boris Johnson stepped into the role of Prime Minister post-research collection; as such, the research was unable to include University of Glasgow or Swansea University student perspectives during this period, but a further discussion into the possible effects of this shift are addressed in the further recommendations section of chapter 6. Although the original study was accomplished differently than intended, the online survey and two focus groups performed unwaveringly kept the theoretical framework intended for this study and achieved the aims of a holistic mixed-method approach to social science research. Furthermore, the initial aim of this research to uncover student perspective on the subject of Brexit, ISM and belonging in the UK was met, just on a smaller scale. The next chapter will describe the outcomes of the study, in both quantitative and qualitative formats and in dialogue with the literature detailed in chapter 2.

IV. Research Outcomes

Introduction

The aim of this research is to consider the extent to which the unfolding Brexit vote is impacting EU student's post-study choices and sense of belonging in the UK. The objectives are restated below:

- ✓ Explore if and how the Brexit is impacting UK University- enrolled EU student's post-career decisions
- ✓ Discover the extent to which the Brexit negotiations are impacting student's sense of belonging within UK communities
- ✓ To consider if and how different voting intentions (Leave or Remain) create different belonging environments for EU students

In studies of migration, belonging is often overshadowed by integration (Ranata and Nancheva, 2018). Opposed to studies of belonging, integration primarily measures outcomes of assimilation in regard to external social factors (e.g. through settlement, adaptability); belonging, however, considers inclusion through the personal dynamics of the social in regard to the self (i.e. feelings) (Ranata and Nancheva, 2018). While this research naturally touches on topics of integration, the purpose of this study was to unpack and identify to what extent EU students' belonging is being affected during and as a result of the changing UK. Sense of belonging (i.e. feelings of inclusion) and post-study decisions acted as instruments in which these belonging parameters were measured. The research was designed in an explanatory sequential format, that which uses quantitative methods of data collection followed by qualitative methods to further explain, inform and speak to initial quantitative results. An online questionnaire (found in Appendix A) was circulated to students of the University of Glasgow and Swansea University with a self-director giving participants the opportunity to then illustrate, develop and communicate their positioning and sense of belonging in semi-structured focus group discussions (questions found in Appendix B). The participants of this research were both undergraduate and post-graduate students from cross-disciplines and varying EU member nationalities. Analysing the questionnaire data and comparing it with focus group discussions revealed the following themes: Comfort Zones, Avoiding Conversation, Lack of Clarity and Funding Queries. The methods of data collection were intentionally chosen to complement and inform one another, likewise the outcomes have intersected as well. Therefore, the following chapter details the listed themes, structured under the headings of sense of belonging and post-study decisions. Figure 4.1 demonstrates this outline.

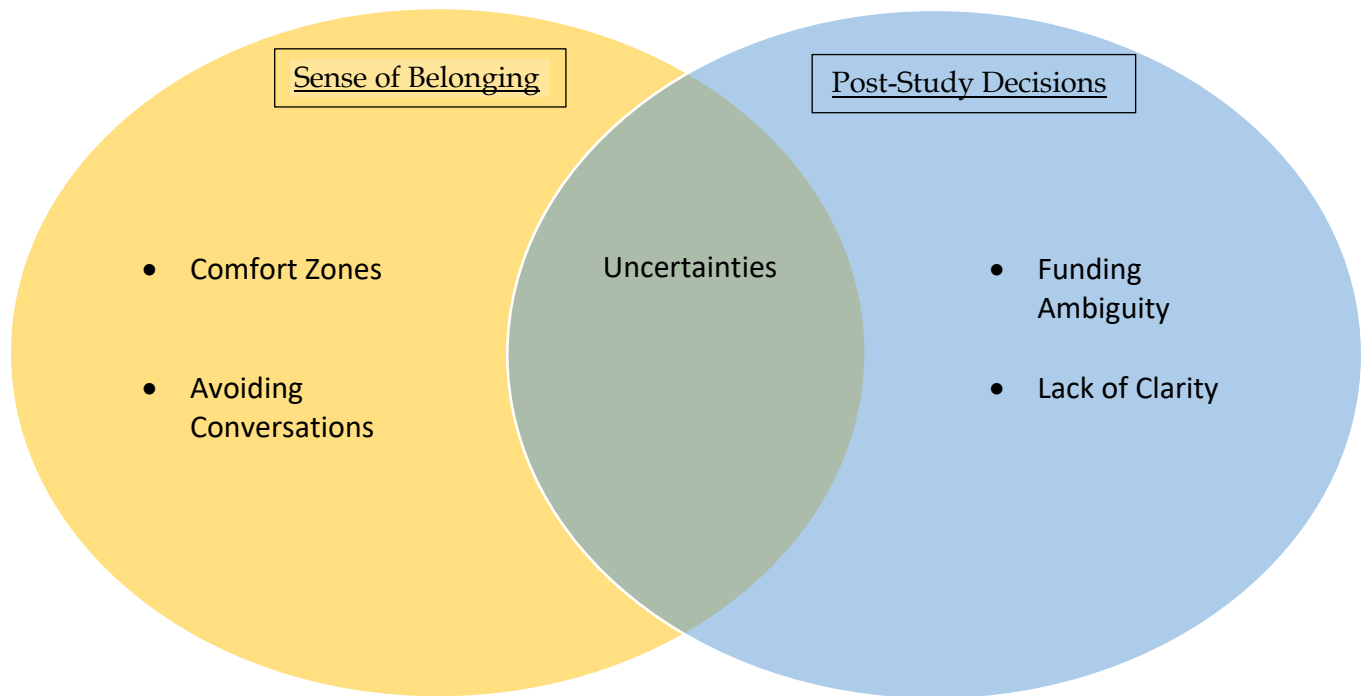


Figure 4.1 *Demonstrates the themes revealed through this research under the study’s sub headings.*

Sense of Belonging

Comfort Zones:

The theory of relational self suggests identity is not something innate or born within us, but instead emerges and evolves in relation to the people, culture and societies we inhabit (May, 2013). As Brexit is communicating anti-immigration outlooks (Blinder, 2011), it is imperative to uncover if and in what capacities seclusion could be occurring for EU students. In order to meet the objectives of this research, regional Brexit orientations needed to be taken into account, therefore Chart 4.1 demonstrates feelings of isolation through participant totals as well as university comparisons.

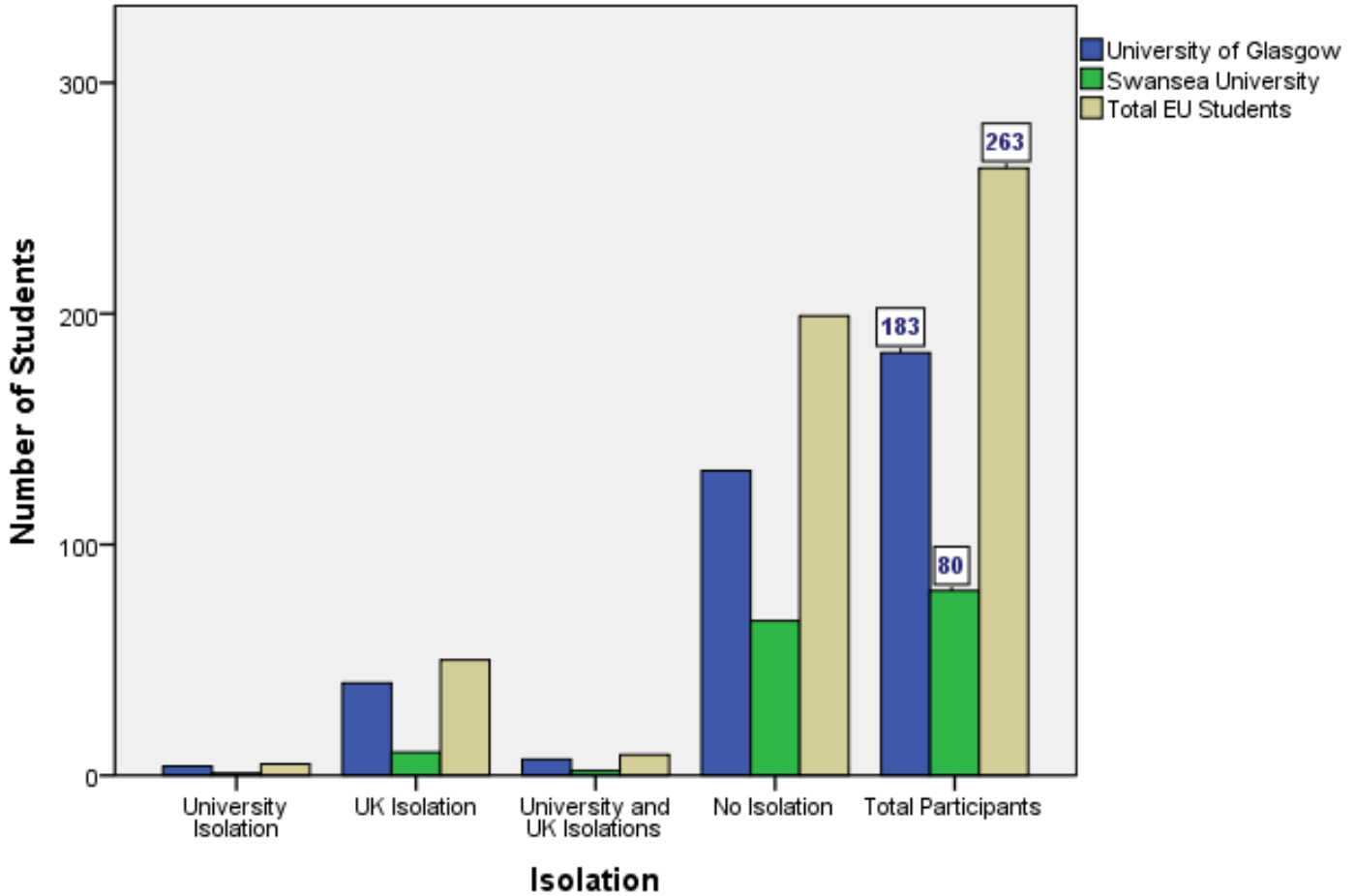


Chart 4.1 *Brexit Isolations*

The table reveals very little Brexit-related isolations to be occurring for EU students in both academic and regional settings. Chart 4.1 reveals the majority of University of Glasgow and Swansea University students to be experiencing ‘no isolation’; however, the difference between the two regions should be noted. A higher number of Swansea University students revealed their feelings of isolation in every category, opposed to University of Glasgow students; this rise in number could be contributed to the Brexit leave voter locale, but confirmation could not be obtained due to a lack of focus group discussions. However, focus groups at the University of Glasgow contributed highly to understanding the outcomes of this chart.

As previous literature reviewed in chapter 2 proposes, universities have the ability to create a singular social and political comfort zone as students often study, live and socialize in one specific locale; this singular experience can form a type of enclosed isolation for students from outside communities (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010). Furthermore, higher education settings are continuing to be thought of as supportive spaces that allow students to develop and think critically in relation to themselves, their nations and with one another (Olcese, Saunders and Tzavidis, 2014; Brooks, 2018). Therefore, in regard to this research's literature and data analyses, comfort zones stand to be an explanation for the minimal Brexit-stimulated isolation feelings occurring for EU students. Supplementary to these theories, the thematic analyzation of focus group discussions revealed students were not only aware of these comfort zones, but aware they could be contributing to the results of Chart 4.1:

In the University environment, it is not very likely to find many cases of isolation due to Brexit because...people are more aware of boundaries, are aware of other people, so they are not as cold towards others (Student 1)

Living in the west end is kind of a bubble and everything in Glasgow as well (is a bubble), I think in general Scotland is not really pro-Brexit (Student 2)

Further focus group discussions revealed little to no feelings of isolation in a changing UK. The examination of these discussions, however, took into consideration the study's regional limitations, the Brexit remain vote locale of Glasgow and the positioning of the university (both politically and regionally). Nevertheless, the thematic analysis of the focus group dialogues tells a story of acceptance and positivity.

The University of Glasgow is an internationally present, global facing university that has proven to exemplify unwavering support through this period of UK uncertainty. Not only does the university have departments dedicated to supporting international students, but it has attempted to ease the worries of its students by confirming their right for EU students to legally remain in the UK throughout the duration of their studies. The university has also openly communicated with students through consistent digital sources (emails, student forum and hub postings) and by holding frequent Brexit-related open forums where central players in the university attempt to respond and resolve their communities' worries and uncertainties.

I have found the international office [a resource for University of Glasgow students] particularly helpful because it [released information] specific to student from the EU...they said we can't know anything and it is just predictions but at least [through this resource] you got an idea of something (Student 3)

This comfort zone was translated on a national scale as well, with further focus group analyses revealing attachments to the territory of Scotland, but not with the UK.

I'm in Scotland and I have a relationship to being in Scotland, but I couldn't put that together with the UK (Student 4)

While I don't have a very objective view of how it is in the entire country, I can say that Scotland, at least Glasgow, is very welcoming (Student 5)

I found everybody (in Glasgow) very friendly and very helpful and haven't felt, you know, kind of discriminated against (Student 6).

Scotland is “remaining” steady in acceptance¹⁶. University of Glasgow is located in Glasgow, Scotland and although as a region, Scotland is still part of the UK, the territory has sought independence with high support from its citizens (Cowburn, 2019). In 2014, a national Scottish referendum was held by the Scottish National Party with results of 55.3% voting no to independence while 44.7% voted yes (BBC News, 2019b). While within this vote, the city of Glasgow favored independence from the UK. Most recently in August of 2019, current Prime Minister Boris Johnson's visit to Scotland revealed not only would a majority of Scottish voter's support Scotland's independence from the UK in a second referendum, but the Labour Party not block a second Scottish referendum (Cowburn, 2019). Clearly, although Scotland remains a UK territory, there appears to be substantial and continuous disconnect between Scotland and the UK.

It could be deduced then, that University of Glasgow is positioned within a Brexit-remain city and national bubble. This type of environment, though supportive, does not occur throughout the UK. Therefore, while comfort zones stand to be an explanation of the minimal Brexit related isolations revealed in Table 4.1, this study was limited to only unpacking University of Glasgow student perspectives and as such the results are unable to accurately claim a general sense of belonging for EU students studying in the UK. When a student transitions from the safe spaces of university, they stand to lose their comfort zoned identities within these collectives, therefore further issues could arise.

Avoiding Conversations:

Surprisingly to this study, further focus group discussions revealed Brexit isolations occurring in a different form than related to self or identity theories; instead these feelings of separation occurred within the topic of Brexit itself. University of Glasgow students expressed their resistance to engage with the topic in conversation, or in public forums, as a majority consider themselves outliers in the process and therefore develop feelings of hesitations around even conversing on the subject.

I sometimes felt um, out, when there was discussion about Brexit among UK nationals because I feel that I cannot really, I'm not really allowed, to have an opinion on that because I'm not a citizen of the United Kingdom (Student 1)

¹⁶ This statement is based only upon the data gathered for this study and the research acknowledges and states (in Chapter 5) the limitations of the study.

I kind of feel the same, I obviously have my own opinions, but I don't feel I could voice them out loud...just because...I'm not British (Student 2)

I wouldn't participate in any discussions; I would avoid that. And it's not my country, my problem (Student, 3)

Some students felt this hesitation was a result of their nationality and unfamiliarity of UK political systems while others paused due to feeling Brexit fatigue; no matter the reasoning, conversations, or lack thereof, are not occurring. This disengagement from the subject in itself creates isolation. As a focus of ISM within UK higher education programmes has and continues to encourage intercultural exchanges for long-term socio-economic partnerships (e.g. Blair's PMIs and Erasmus+) the willingness to discuss significant political changes, as Brexit, should not be discouraged. While higher education institutions are considered to be spaces of critical engagement (Brooks, 2018), focus group analyses revealed the Brexit vote is affecting these types of engagement for the participants within both university and regional spaces. While this cannot be confirmed for all EU students enrolled in UK higher education institutions, the focus group analysis of this study leaves a lingering impression that Brexit is shaking the foundations of University of Glasgow intercultural exchanges. This begs the question, then, could this be translating to a national level? With ISM continuously growing, these issues must be addressed and uncovered in order for the UK to continue to compete in the global ISM markets.

Post-Study Decisions

Students have a personal preference on the pathway they choose to take after their studies are completed. Of these pathways, two primary possibilities emerged from this research: furthering educational research projects or programmes and entering the workforce¹⁷. In order to meet the intended aims of this research, the online questionnaire enacted as a foundation to measure the general impacts of Brexit, while the focus groups complimented and further explored questionnaire responses. Therefore, the following discussion will initially report questionnaire results, followed by discussions on funding and lack of clarity in order to respond, link and further explain questionnaire outcomes with focus group discussions.

Initial questionnaire results revealed conflicting thoughts. Chart 4.2 revealed a majority of students consider their post-study plans to consist of living or working within the UK, while further responses were primarily split between working in another EU country and uncertainty due to Brexit. However, upon being asked the extent of UK visa and immigration regulation familiarities, results located in Chart 4.3, a majority of students expressed their lack of knowledge around these processes. As EU students are now being faced with changing mobility procedures, the lack knowledge of the necessary legal processes is concerning, especially as high numbers reported their aspirations of staying in the UK. Further, Chart 4.4 reveals that Brexit is indeed having a great impact on University of Glasgow student's post-study plans, while little impacts are reported

¹⁷ Although the UK Home Office has released the ability for EU nationals to apply within the settled status scheme, a majority of participants in this research had not qualified for this status.

of Swansea University students. Although unable to confirm, this difference could very well be due to the regional locale of each university.

While these results initially seemed to vary, further focus group discussions clarified and unified student positioning on post-study decisions in the time of Brexit through two emerging themes: lack of clarity and funding ambiguities. Lack of clarity directly relates to the overwhelming non-transparency and indecisiveness students feel the UK government is displaying through the time of Brexit; while funding uncertainties relates to the ambiguity of financial opportunities accessible in a post-Brexit UK.

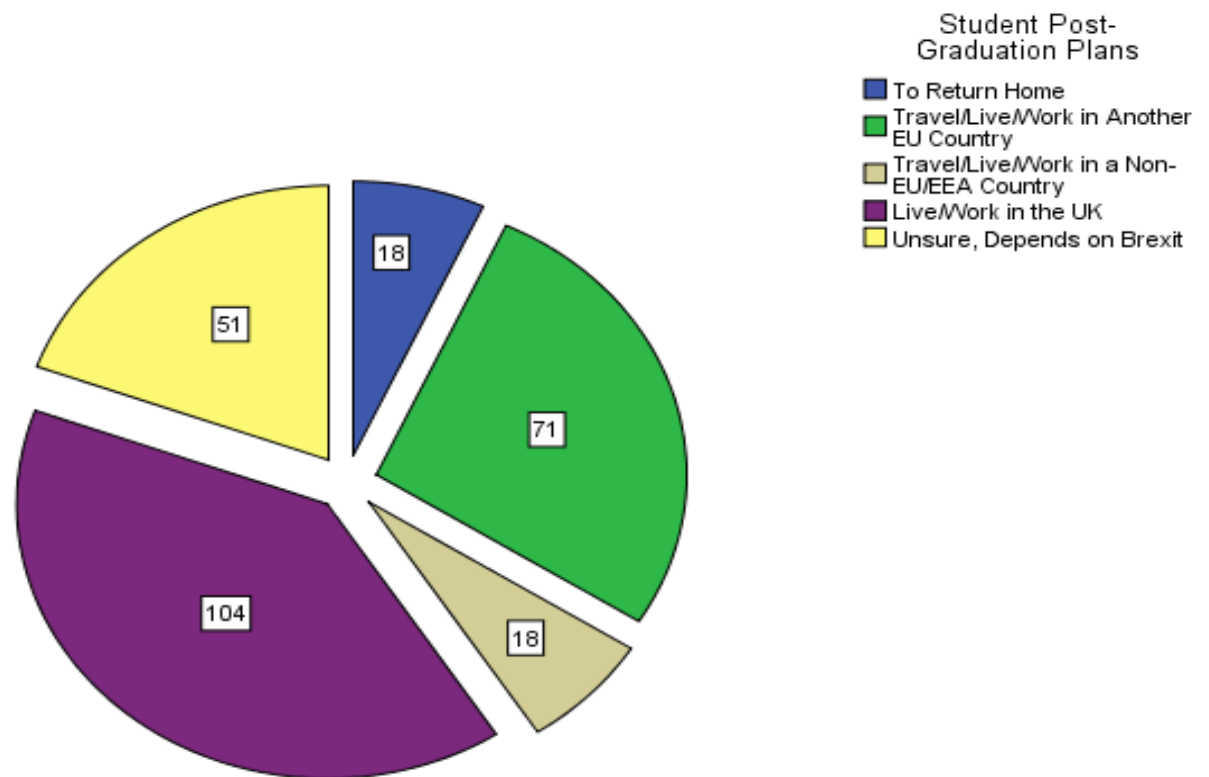


Chart 4.2 *EU Student Post-Study Plans*

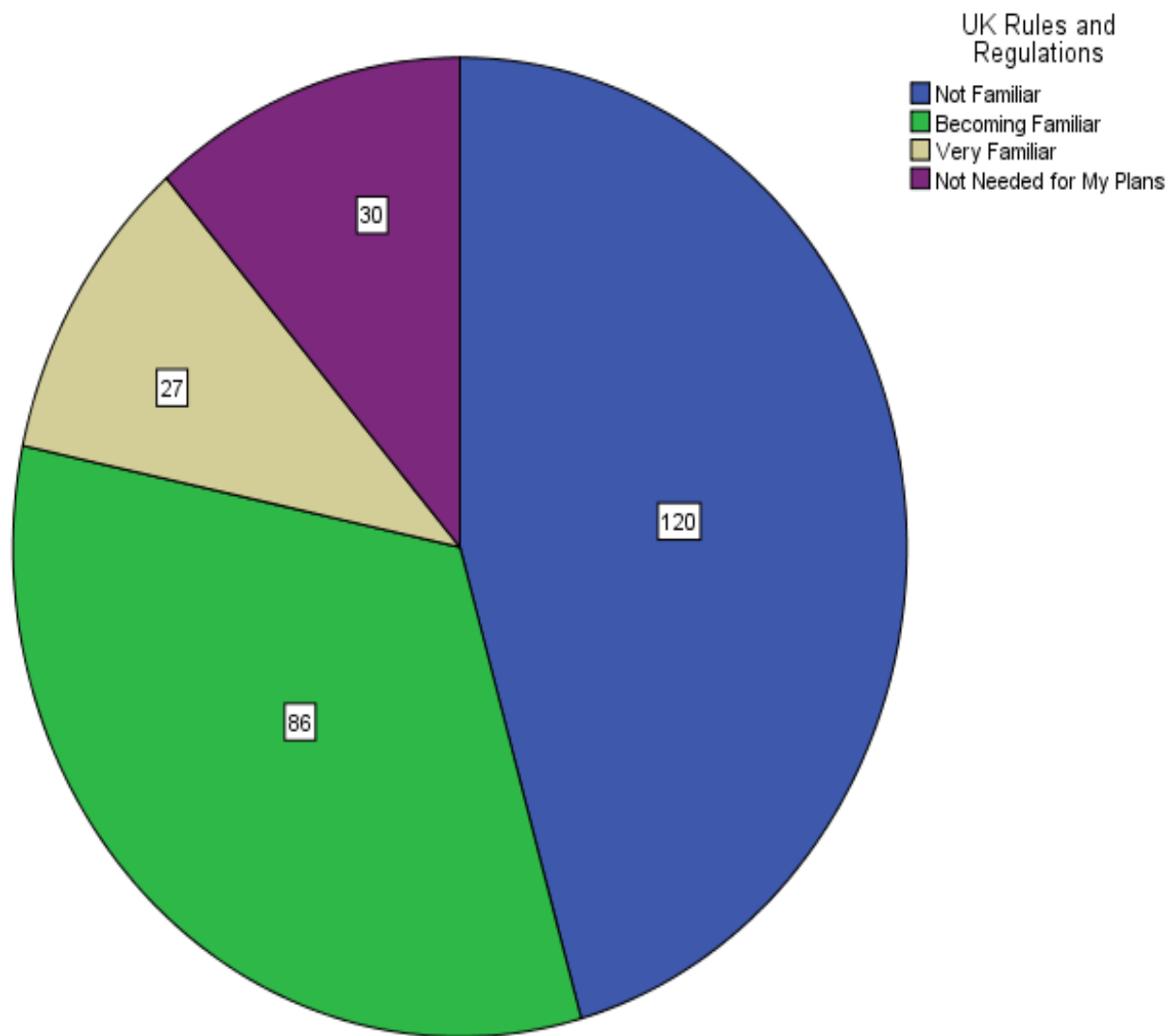


Chart 4.3 *Familiarity with UK Visa and Immigration Rules and Regulations*

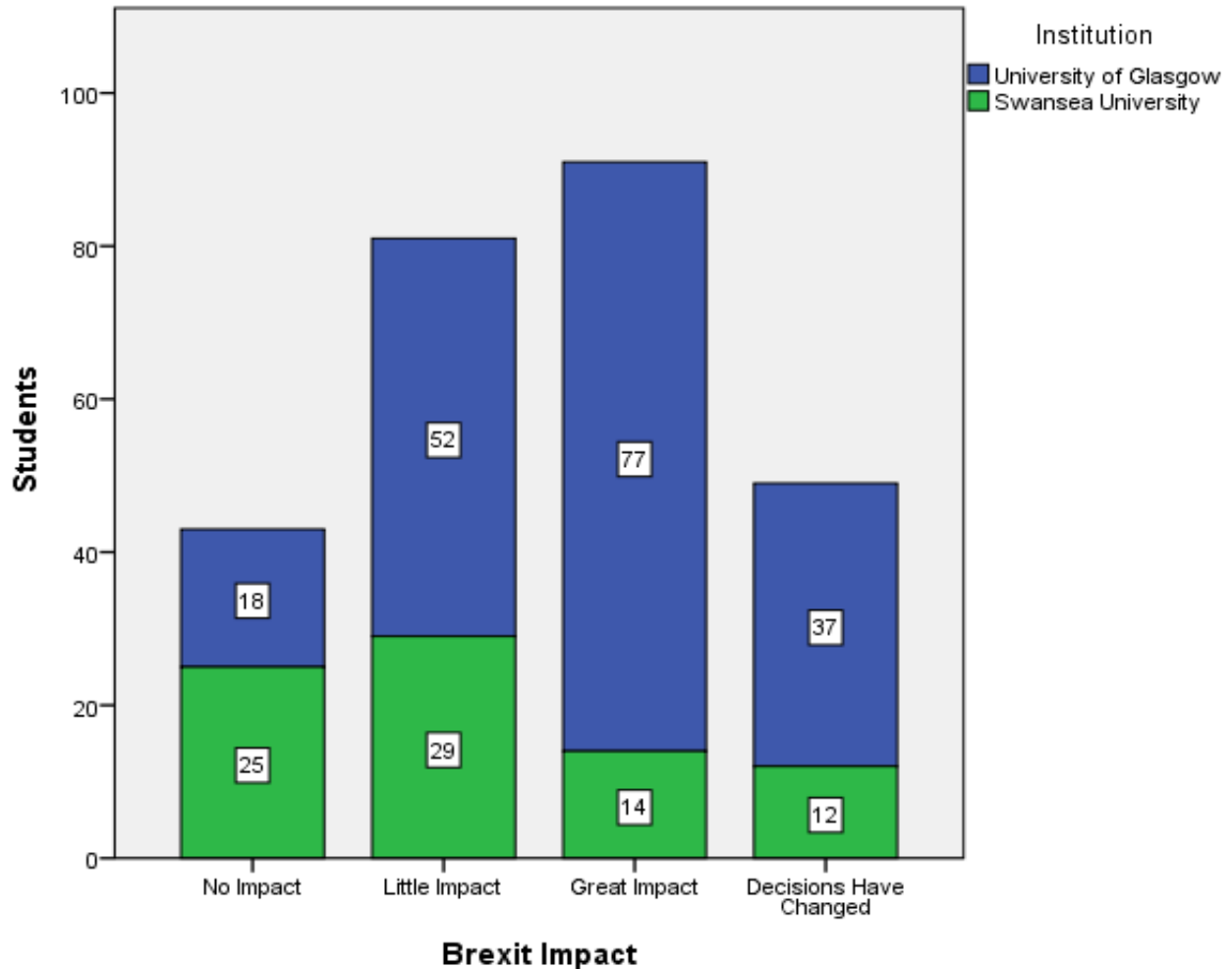


Chart 4.4 *Brexit Impact On EU Student Post-Study Plans*

Funding Ambiguity:

Students often further their research and education by enrolling in continuing degree programmes or projects. For the student participants of this research, masters, PHD or post-doctoral programmes were all being considered as possible post-study plans. The funding of these programmes is critical in enrollment success, and as of current EU students have an assortment of resources available through EU partnerships, such as Erasmus+, or private investors. However, with the UK negotiating their exit from the EU, the uncertainty of funding accesses and availabilities revealed itself to be central in concern.

... but in all cases Brexit can make a difference because we don't know what will be the status of EU people here. So, for example when it comes to funding, where will the funding be coming from. The UK maybe will put on hold some of the funding, but is it going to be happening at the moment because of all the uncertainties and how the process is actually working and who is regulating all of this... (Student 1).

The same student furtherly expressed pressures and concerns in the time leading up to the March 2019 Brexit decisions¹⁸:

...Considering what is going to happen to projects ongoing, all the grants people have been applying for, whether they would just get denied based on the fact that nobody knows what is going to happen. So, I guess I felt the pressure from that... (Student 1)

As these students acknowledge and earlier literature discusses, collaborations in funding are heavily sourced from EU partnerships (European Commission, 2019a), noting the unraveling of UK/EU relations has affects the on both social and educational levels:

So much of our studies are being funded by the EU so if they (UK) completely leaves these societies, then where is all the money going to come from right? The collaboration is going to – not fall through – but be a lot more difficult to obtain (Student 2).

Although the programmes such as Erasmus+ and universities maintain their desire to continue the funding for future student projects and programmes, it is uncertain if this will be possible due to the unsettled EU exit; furthermore, the UK Home Office has sustained contingency regulations to maximize confidence in participants and applicants through 2020, but has acknowledged in the case of the UK leaving the EU with a no-deal, EU funding for Erasmus+ and associating projects may no longer be guaranteed (European Commission, 2019b; Gov.uk, 2019). This lack of clarity exists not only in future funding's but impacts multiple facets of an EU student's post-study concerns.

Lack of Clarity:

These concerns of uncertainty around funding bled into conversations on the lack of clarity UK government officials are presenting to the global community; consequently, students have begun to question the transition into the workforce and are therefore actively changing their plans due to the vote. This is not the first time the UK government was criticized for lack of clarity surrounding the impending outcomes, in fact this has been a growing concern since the early aftermath of the Brexit vote (Mardell, 2016; Iacobucci, 2018; Adamson, 2019). Further discussions revealed, as a result of this lack of clarity, the inabilities to fully prepare for the necessary legal UK working-right documents, confirming this uncertainty in arrangements leads to lack of interests in staying in the UK.

It (Brexit) can affect you making any type of plans, like looking at internships and roles...if their (UK) recruitment process is you must have an unrestricted right to work in the UK, then I guess you should just flip plans and look somewhere else (Student 3)

¹⁸ In March of 2019, the UK was set to leave the EU. However, this date was pushed back due to the UK's inability to settle the terms of their EU exit.

Before Brexit, I thought maybe for my post-graduate applications I would just apply in the UK, but now I will definitely apply somewhere else (Student 4).

I didn't have a specific plan but also I considered both [staying and leaving] options, but now if I plan to say it might not happen so it is better to have a solid plan to move somewhere else then have it prepared and then maybe stay (Student 5)

Chart 4.3 revealed the lack of knowledge these EU participants had on the UK legal residential and working procedures, while focus group conversations discuss the lack of clear communication from the UK government officials. Therefore, it could be noted that this discourse in knowledge it is not just a lack of interest in the UK processes, but the lack of available resources from the government.

I've lived in countries where I have no right to stay before and I have had to have visa, but I know I need a visa, so I need to plan for that (Student 6)

It's written somewhere instead of just oh you know, one day is this but the next day is something completely different and the rules are changing but they are not telling us how or when (Student 7)

It's more pressure somehow...I did actually change a lot of my plans and I am planning to go back to Spain¹⁹ in September (Student 8)

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the outcomes of this empirical mix-methods research study by examining the four themes that emerged from the combination of online questionnaire and focus group results and linking them to current ISM literature. These four themes are restated below:

- ✓ Comfort Zones
- ✓ Avoiding Conversations
- ✓ Funding Ambiguity
- ✓ Lack of Clarity

Notably, this research revealed a common thread throughout these themes: uncertainty, which is represented in Figure 4.1. Uncertainty is highly affecting transitional processes, government communications, future plans and potential partnerships; and continues to be the source of confusion and fatigue for not only EU students, but both EU and UK citizens as well (Gore, 2019; McGee, 2019; Spence, 2019). Therefore, through the outcomes of this research study and complementary literature review, it can be concluded that Brexit is highly affecting belonging within the UK. Furthermore, the extent to which Brexit is affecting this belonging is extensive and stirring uncertainties in both personal areas of sense of belonging (through comfort zones and avoiding conversations) and post-study plans (through funding ambiguities and lack of clarity) for EU students.

¹⁹ This was changed in order to keep anonymity of the student and refrain from identifiers occurring.

V. Conclusion

Introduction and Research Objectives: Summary of Findings and Conclusions

This study has illuminated a range of personal, social and political student mobility theories and perspectives in the context of a changing UK. It has provided a literature-based review into the subjects of international student mobility, student roles within UK higher education, UK student immigration policies, the transition from education to job markets and international student sense of belonging. Furthermore, this paper has described, justified and reported on the mixed-methods study chosen to compliment ongoing literature. The collaboration of these perspectives concludes that Brexit is indeed affecting EU student's sense of belonging and post-graduation decisions. Through the lenses of sense of belonging and post-study decisions, EU students from the University of Glasgow and Swansea University, shed light on current and future personal and professional discourses as a result of Brexit. From a mixed-methods research process linked with literature-based analysis, four primary themes emerged: Funding Ambiguity, Lack of Clarity, Comfort Zones and Avoiding Conversations. Additionally, a common, underlying theme of uncertainty intertwined the study's research outcomes and acts a foundation for the uncovered discourses. These themes attempted to respond to and meet the following objectives:

- a. Discover if and how Brexit is impacting UK University- enrolled EU student's post-study decisions
- b. Identify the extent to which the Brexit negotiations are impacting EU student's sense of belonging within UK communities
- c. Compare if opposing Brexit vote UK territories (Leave or Remain) create different belonging environments for EU students

The following sections will outline the outcomes of this study in reference to the specified objective.

- A. The literature detailed in chapter 2, provided a context of UK ISM historical and current policy shifts in order to help bring up any potential personal impacts Brexit is having on EU students. It is clear, through the outcomes of this study, that post-graduation plans are highly contingent on the outcomes of the Brexit, as both the structures of funding opportunities and settlement schemes are yet to be clarified in the terms of the exit. This conclusion draws from the online survey results analysed through SPSS, analysis of discussions through focus groups conducted at the University of Glasgow and a synthesis of these research tools with the concerns expressed in the literature review. Further thematic comparisons revealed, it can be concluded that EU students are indeed finding their post-graduation plans changing as a result of the uncertainties the Brexit vote has implemented in UK higher education systems.
- B. Inversely, EU student sense of belonging in the UK during Brexit, as current, is not taking as much of a bearing. As Brooks (2018) suggests, student roles in higher education are changing noting institutions are demonstrating to be a space of political

exploration and purposely widening their global partnerships. Therefore students, often living within the university bubble, are encouraged to critically consider themselves in relation to the global community, physically and emotionally. However, although comforting, these bubbles have the potential to further international students from their host-country communities, therefore defeating the purposes of ISM. Further, focus group results highlighted the indirect discourses positioned within belonging, the lack of engagement with the topic. Although this could be a result of Brexit fatigue or other isolation issues, no matter the reasoning it poses as detrimental to the UK higher education sector; it proves detrimental because this lack of engagement contests with not only ISM intercultural immersion goals but the safe spaces that live within higher education settings (Brooks, 2018; (Gore, 2019; McGee, 2019; Spence, 2019; Tan; 2019)

- C. Although firm Brexit voter locale comparisons were unachievable, outcomes of Chart 4.1 and Chart 4.4 suggests EU students within the different Brexit voter territories could be experiencing different belonging environments and overall Brexit impacts as they are reporting different experiences; University of Glasgow students report greater post-study impacts due to Brexit and less isolation, while Swansea students report lesser post-study impacts due to Brexit and more isolation experiences. Further, focus group discussions highlight the inclusiveness of Scotland and hospitable people of Glasgow, and discuss the divide between Scotland and the rest of the UK; these outcomes reveal the region is consistent with the Brexit vote results.

Study Limitations and New Developments

It must be reminded the focus of this project was to get a sense of the available data and exposure to fieldwork. Therefore, although further examination into the structures of UK higher education is available, the research stands firm in its outcomes and necessary examinations. Furthermore, the research is aware of its limitations and establishes the position of participants reside in two metropolitan cities, whereby Glasgow, the primary contributor to this research, has a high number of universities for one city locale. Furthermore, the research acknowledges the outweighed involvement between University of Glasgow students and Swansea University students, and as a result the unbalance of questionnaire and focus group outcomes. Unfortunately, upon completion of this study a further limitation arose surrounding the online questionnaire, whereby the researcher noticed students were able to choose multiple answers for each of the questions. This frustrating mistake further limits the outcomes of this study and compromises the validity and trustworthiness of this research. A final limitation directly concerns the implication of the study for future research on this topic. The research acknowledges the final outcomes of Brexit have yet to be set and the subject was consistently debated throughout the duration of this study. Furthermore, less than 3 weeks before submission Boris Johnson was officiated as the newest Prime Minister, taking his place on Downing Street. This significant change in leadership has unknown consequences for higher education and the UK, as the new PM is the elected official of the conservative party, known for anti-migration outlooks. As a result, only preliminary discussions, positioned in the timing of the research collection, can be drawn for the true implications the Brexit vote has on UK as a nation and UK ISM.

Future Recommendations and Contribution to Knowledge

International student mobility in higher education is rising, with the UK traditionally been a major competitor in the global race, however the impacts of the Brexit vote have not yet come into reality, but effects of the vote are already being felt. Therefore, the nation runs a further risk of losing crucial economic, social and cultural partnerships on a national and global level. Although this project directly concerns the political and social changes affecting EU students, future studies on ISM for non-EU students would contribute highly to the belonging conversation within UK higher education institutions.

Many institutions during this period of transition are externally establishing their continuous connections with the EU, no matter the final results of Brexit. These standings, although reassuring for current and future international students, have the potential to further divide the higher education sector in the UK with the rest of the nation; consequently, changing the nature of the higher education sector within the nation. It is recommended, as a result of this research, that the UK higher education sector and the UK government work as a collected power to clarify the future of the nation and higher education to avoid detrimental loss of global admiration and student value. This recommendation would have a number of benefits: primarily it would aid the UK to continue to hold their place in global ISM competitiveness aiding in social and economic capitals. Furtherly, in such a dividing time for the nation, this recommendation would rest in a position of unification.

Self-Reflection

Throughout the life-cycle of this research process, there has been a wide range of conflicting emotions both related to the empirical data process and the write up portion. The excitement of creating a large research project based on my interests has provided me the opportunity to better grasp the subject area; it has been enjoying reading the work of fellow academics and having the opportunity to delve into the theories that have shaped the structure of my project and interests. Although limitations altered my initial proposal vastly, it was within the outcomes of these limitations that I found immense learning opportunities, mostly resting within the development stage and synthesis stages. The practicality of building a complex research project comes with pitstops and disappointment, but in hindsight I have found those are the points of the process that challenged me to decipher through and express my central aims further in a more strategic way.

As a researcher, I am familiar with the barriers facing international study in the UK through personal and professional experiences; therefore I hope this research helps others, both student and society, to gain the knowledge and perspective of why the subject of international student mobility to the UK is worth being continuously examined. Furthermore, I hope it is possible that by engaging with this work, EU students may explore, feel empowered and better equipped to understand the significant changes associated with themselves and their counterparts in the time of Brexit.

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Appendix A

International Student Mobility: A Multi-Case Study Analysis of European Union Student Post-Study Career Decisions in the Time of Brexit

*Research Online Questionnaire
(12 Questions / Approx: 5minutes)*

1. I Confirm I Have Read Over the Attached²⁰ Plain Language Statement and Hereby Agree to Participate in this Study.
 - a. Agree
 - b. Disagree

2. Level of Study
 - a. Undergraduate
 - b. Post-Graduate²¹

3. What is Your Field of Study?
 - a. Science(s)
 - b. Law
 - c. Business
 - d. Medicine(s)
 - e. Creative Arts
 - f. Education
 - g. Political Sciences
 - h. Maths
 - i. Other

4. European Country of Origin
(Open Ended Fill-In Response Question)

5. I ensure I keep up with Brexit related news
 - a. Not Very Often
 - b. Monthly
 - c. Weekly
 - d. Everyday

6. How Likely Will Brexit Impact Your Post-Graduation Plans or If Plans Have Been Made, Rate Brexit's Impact on Plans
 - a. No Impact

²⁰ The Plain Language Statement (PLS) (which outlined the details of the study, data storage information and all participant rights/anonymity information) was approved by the University of Glasgow ethics committee and attached as a link in the survey for participants to read before proceeding. All participants must agree to have read the PLS before proceeding with the survey.

²¹ This included all masters, PHD and furthering doctoral programmes

- b. Little Impact
 - c. Great Impact
 - d. My Decisions Have Changed Because of Brexit
7. My Post-Graduation Plan Is
- a. To Return Home
 - b. Travel/Live/Work in Another EU Member Country
 - c. Travel/Live/Work in a non-EU/EEA Member Country
 - d. Live/Work in the UK
 - e. Unsure, depends on Brexit Negotiations
8. Are You Familiar With UK Visa and Immigrations Procedures and Regulations
- a. Not familiar
 - b. Becoming Familiar
 - c. Very familiar
 - d. Not Interested/ Not Applicable for My Plans
9. How does Brexit Make You Feel
- a. Sad
 - b. Isolated
 - c. Nervous
 - d. Confused
 - e. Happy
 - f. Indifferent
10. Your Institution's UK Region
- a. Scotland
 - b. Wales
11. Do You Experience Brexit-related Isolations within your University or living in the United Kingdom?
- a. University Isolation
 - b. Isolation Living in the United Kingdom
 - c. Both
 - d. No Brexit Isolation Experiences Have Occurred
12. Would You Be Willing to Partake in a 1-Hour Focus Group Discussing Your Place in the Brexit Negotiations and University Experience based at your home campus?
 (Open Ended Fill-In Response Question: (Voluntary)²² Participant's Email:

²² Participants were able to leave this section blank/unanswered if they did not prefer to disclose information or take part in the focus group.

Appendix B

International Student Mobility: A Multi-Case Study Analysis of European Union Student Post-Study Career Decisions in the Time of Brexit

Semi-Structured Research Focus Group

(Approx: 45 minutes for questioning/interviewing and 15 for participant consent = 1 Hour)

This research attempts to uncover the ways in which the Brexit negotiations are influencing EU student's post-graduation decisions and sense of belonging

Approximately 10 questions with answers from EU member students, 8 participants per group

1. Describe Brexit in a color/ What does this color signify for you?
2. Can you think of any ways Brexit has changed your lives day to day?
3. Where do you get the majority of your Brexit information? Are you influenced by what is heard/reported in the media concerning Brexit?
4. In what ways has Brexit changed your post-graduation-plans?
5. Do you connect with your greater Glasgow/ Swansea community? Does the fact this territory had a "remain"/ "leave: vote in Brexit represent your experiences.
6. Do you identify as European or to a certain nationality?
7. What is your attitude currently towards to the UK
8. Is this different from when you began your studies.
9. Have the Brexit negotiations had an impact on your attitude.