

**It's Not Really the (Other) End of the World: Relationship Maintenance,
Performance and the Role of Instant Communication Technologies amongst
International Students**

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Executive Summary

This interview was conducted at The University of Western Australia (UWA) March 30th 2015 to satisfy the field-work component of the overarching research goal *Intercultural learning at home: Promoting internationalisation on campus*, a research project conducted by UWA's Anthropology and Sociology Department.

This section of the project has focused on the use of instant communication technologies by international students studying at UWA. The primary aim is to observe international students' engagement with various types of instant communication technologies by, the main focus being reasons for, frequency of use and type preference.

As an anthropology honours student, I am required to conduct qualitative research for the project under the supervision of the project's Chief Investigator, Professor Loretta Baldassar. I conducted a single semi-structured interview (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015) revolving around a unique research aim in accordance with the main research goal, which focused on the role of instant communication technologies by in maintaining contact with 'home' and the possible tensions this could create for the international student: *the relationship between the desire to create distance between the self and home, and the perceived expectation to maintain regular contact with home* (see Appendix A).

I originally intended to focus on the tension between the desire to create distance between the self and home (Barnik 2010, p. 23) and the pressuring expectation of continually keeping in contact with home, through the ease and convenience of instant communication technologies. However, my research provided a different perspective as summarised below:

- The desire to maintain the *least amount* of distance between the self and home

- Tensions within relationships that arose from the *type* of instant communication technologies used
- A *performance of the self* to accommodate different instant communication technologies mediums.

Introduction

The main premise to my research aim was the suggestion by Barnik (2010) concerning the tension between the desire to create a distance between the self and home (Barnik 2010, p. 23). Studying at an international institution allows for individuals to create a sense of social disconnection with their routine social world. This is presented by Barnik (2010) as a positive and actively pursued experience: ‘a means of temporarily dislocating from their everyday lives’ (Barnik 2010, p. 21). Choosing to study abroad is a chance for students to develop themselves professionally as well as personally, outside of their typical social circles and supervision. Studying in a new environment within an international setting allows students to experience a different part of the world within a familiar routine, creating a sense of security within a new cultural setting (Barnik 2010)

However, this sense of freedom can be strained as discussed by Madianou and Miller (2012). Tension can be created by the use of instant communication technologies. The use of instant communication methods such as email, texting, Skype and social media websites creates an internal paradox upon the freedom of being physically separated: despite vast distances between individuals, the ease and access of instant communication technologies allows for constant communication virtually at any time (Madianou & Miller 2012). Individual anxieties at being ignored, forgotten or as

having a sense of unimportance or low priority creates tensions in relationships when there is a lack of synchronisation in communication (Jacobson 2007) and connectedness (Rosenthal, Russell & Thomson 2007). Within the sphere of infinite reachability, anxieties are only reduced if the call/email/text/message is answered; if not, the anxiety increases, and perceived wrongs by the sender to the sendee are magnified into major personal arguments. This tension is evident in Ilana Gershon's 2010 work *The Break Up 2.0*. Gershon (2010) discusses issues with interpretation, assumption, inferences and personal biases that affect the way certain information is interpreted depending on the media forms that are used.

Interpretation issues, for example, can occur depending on the type of medium that is used to convey the message. The same information sent by the same individual through a variety of instant communication mediums can be understood differently in accordance with the different connotations associated with the various technologies (Gershon 2010). This issue of interpretation leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication, creating tension within the relationship. One reason for this could be the distinct ideologies different users have about different mediums of instant communication technologies, and the contexts of appropriate usage (Jacobson 2007). These individual ideologies signify and regulate the way a certain individual uses instant communication technologies, and the way they engage with others through this medium. If the parties engaged in communication hold different notions about what is and is not appropriate conduct, information is misinterpreted and the meaning is misconstrued (Jacobson 2007).

Methodology

A single 50-minute interview took place at 11:00am on Monday the 30th of March 2015 in the EDFAA library on the UWA Nedlands campus. My interviewee, Marnie, a 31-year-old female from the North-east of England was recruited through a mutual acquaintance.

I prepared an interview schedule that guided my interview process, but I chose to pursue the themes evident in Marnie's responses. My decision proved effective, as Marnie became comfortable in discussing themes she had introduced, as opposed to constant re-direction. This led to a form of open discussion, which allowed for a range of themes to prevail within the interview structure. On multiple occasions, I repeated to Marnie that she was not obligated to respond to my deeper probing into sensitive issues, such as relationship issues; she repeated eloquently that she would not divulge anything she did not want on record.

Conducting the interview on the campus familiar to Marnie allowed her to feel comfortable, and relaxed the structure of interviewer and interviewee: as I was unfamiliar with the EDFAA library, Marnie led us to our pre-booked room. Our joint composure was relaxed, and the interview began with an easy confidence. With Marnie's consent, the interview was recorded with additional note taking to further record body language, gestures and manner. Full transcription and analysis occurred in the following few days and weeks after the interview.

LIMITATIONS

Several factors resulted in my interview experience as relatively unproblematic. I recruited Marnie for the interview through a mutual acquaintance, who was present at our first meeting in person. This reduced the formality of the interviewer/ee structure, and allowed for me to establish a rapport with Marnie instantly. Further, Marnie had completed qualitative research in her own honours project, and was familiar with the interviewing process. If I were to conduct a range of interviews, I wonder at how each experience would differ, whether my approach would require alterations, and how this would impact on my findings.

Results

The results perpetuated a different discussion than the original question sought. Instead of seeking to establish the self away from home, and the tensions instant communication technologies created around this desire, the dominant themes were similar in context, but induced different conclusions. The three major findings encompass the concept of the self *within* different instant communication technologies, the desire to maintain the *least* amount of distance, and the tensions instant communication technologies caused within relationships due to the ease of accessibility of different *types* of instant communication technologies. These themes will be addressed initially under Erving Goffman's theory of performance (Goffman 1956).

Distance From the Performing Self

Goffman's theory of social performance has been applied to online identities (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013). Extrapolating this to apply to various identities

formulated within instant communication technologies, a sense of performance and regulation of the self is clearly evident. An individual is conscious of being observed by an audience, for example social media platforms, and will perform to those watching, reading or following, by observing certain rules and social conventions. Failing to do results in 'losing face' (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013) and failing to project the image or persona they wish to create. The actor's behaviour will be different in private; for the international student privacy permeates a disconnected world, where no performance is necessary. A new element when applying this concept to alternate forms of instant communication technologies that are not 'online', such as phone calls or text messages is that the individual must manage multiple self-perceptions within multiple mediums, dependant upon the requirements of different audiences, *'I do telephone me eldest grandparent, who's 85, cos she's on her own... all she wants, is to hear, is my voice.'*

Manipulating the information available to public is another form of controlling one's performance. Censoring information on social media was an action Marnie believed crucial in maintaining a neutral relationship with her brother in an otherwise conflicted and sensitive situation. This act of censoring activities and behaviours from the public sphere allowed Marnie to control other's perceptions, specifically her brother's, of her social life. By engaging in the practice of 'self-editing' (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013) Marnie controlled the flow of information within her communicative sphere, and manipulated the portrayal of her 'everyday self' (Bullingham & Vasconcelos 2013). When in the 'front stage', the individual is conscious of being observed by an audience; their behaviour is conducted according to relevant social conventions. Actions conducted privately, in this case disconnected,

will be different as there is no need for performance. To clarify, Marnie depicts on social medias she knows her brother frequents activities she believes him to tolerate; her actual behaviour outside the instant communicative mediums is different.

‘Some things me mam an’ I don’t put things on Facebook because we know it upsets me brother to know we’re dong stuff, so he will talk to us less, and it opens our eyes to how small you can live within the UK, ... I know he wants to break free from that little world but he doesn’t and he takes that out on me and me mam.’

The ease and access of instant communication technology removes the social practice of ‘small talk’ (Madianou and Miller 2010), previously used as a method of easing into difficult conversations. Issues within relationships can manifest, due to the abrupt directness into the main line of communication, and if the communication is perceived as disruptive or persistent. For Marnie and her brother, the notion of constant and persistent instant communication blurs personal boundaries, which creates tension, as Marnie perceives herself as restricted in her movements for fear of upsetting her brother, *‘At the end of the day I live here and I have to make a life here, and sometimes I think that’s difficult for him to accept.’*

There is a significant difference when Marnie discusses how she keeps in contact with different people, by using another type of instant communication technology: telephoning home. This medium poses different kinds of tension for Marnie within the relationship, as it is less ‘instantly’ able to connect her with the recipient. No message can be left on Facebook, or typed into Skype – if the caller does not pick up, the time difference makes the issue of continuous contact more difficult.

'... it feels like sometimes if you're not continuously being in touch with them, they feel like, it feels like they think you're, not thinking about them, wanting to communicate, it's like you've moved to a different country, you don't care anymore, so there's that constant need to keep in touch.'

The Path of Equi-Distance

Marnie emphasised her fear of being forgotten, especially with respect to her only niece. Being at a different stage in her life to her social circle at home (see Appendix B, p. 22), themes of being out of sync with her life 'back home' were accompanied with the repetitive fear of being forgotten by those she wants to maintain a strong relationship with.

'... My brother's got a niece, sorry my brother has a daughter, so I've got a niece, so she's only 3. So, if I don't, feels like if I don't continuously keep in contact with her at least once a week, I'm scared in case she'll forget who I am.'

This fear further perpetuates the desire to create the least amount of distance from Marnie with her relationships at home. Feelings of guilt and selfishness plague Marnie about her decision, but in turn fuel her desire to manage her projection of self in the sentiment of Goffman's identity construction framework (Goffman 1956) to those at home in order to solidify the image or performance that she has made the right decision, ... *'me grandma was devastated, ... cos I was leaving her, she was gonna lose us, I think deep down she knew it was a good thing,'*

Within the internal medium of instant communication technology, dissonance occurs between the performance of various identities of self, and the consequential

management of not only those different identities, but also the different types of instant communication technologies through which those perceptions are displayed. Issues impacting on how the self is portrayed include a desire to maintain relationships at a high level of closeness and conflict between establishing a life as an international student and the 'home' self.

Significance and Future Direction

These findings highlight anxieties and tensions that can be experienced through the consistent use and reliance upon various instant communication technologies to maintain relationships and closeness in an international setting, where distance prohibits other kinds of communication. Further, the management of how the 'self' is projected through different types of instant communication technologies suggests a manipulation of identity, so as to control the way an individual is received over instant communication technologies, but also consciously impact on potential inferences made about the information presented, for example, status posts on Facebook.

Instant communication technologies has been shown to be essential in maintaining contact with others in an international setting, but the essential nature of these methods of contact have been shown to create a unique kind of relationship tension which is anticipated and managed through the manipulation and control of the performance of the self within the different mediums. These results allow for a deeper insight into the impacts of instant communication technologies relationships for international students, and could potentially be extrapolated into other forms of instant communication technologies dependant communications within settings of

great physical distances. The specific emphasis on relationship tension and consequential self management could be investigated further in order to develop strategies to address the substantial and potentially damaging impacts a necessary dependence upon instant communication technologies can have within communal relations. Within the broader research context, support strategies addressing this issue could enrich the international student experience, allowing for a more satisfactory engagement by international students.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Research Aim: I aim to explore the effects of instant communication amongst Study Abroad students at UWA. Specifically, I will focus on the tension between the desire to create a distance between the self and home (Barnik 2010, p. 23) and the expectation of continually keeping in contact with home, through the ease and convenience of instant communication technology.

PROMPTS

Set recording device (make sure to check it functions properly)

Make sure participant is comfortable (do they require water etc.)

Introduce self

Discuss the participation sheet – any questions/concerns

Go through confidentiality

Discuss note-taking preferences/issues (i.e., are they comfortable with written notes during the interview or would they prefer you take notes after etc.)

Initial questions:

1. What country have you come to UWA from?
2. What are you studying?
3. Why did you choose UWA?
4. What do you like about Perth/WA?
5. Does the distance from here to home appeal to you? Why/in what ways?
6. Who's important to you in your life back home? Friends, parents, siblings...
7. What were their opinions to you studying abroad at UWA?
8. Did these have any impact/implications on your decision?

Questions focusing on 'distance between self and home':

9. Why did you choose to study abroad?
10. For how long are you here? What were your reasons for that time period?
(e.g., financial, family/social/work commitments)
11. Were you worried about being away from family/friends? Or not? Why?
12. What are some positive aspects of your experiences being away from home?
13. What are some negatives?
14. Has your experience lived up to your expectations or has it been different in some ways?
15. Have you encountered anything unexpected during your time on study abroad?

Questions focusing on 'keeping in contact with home – methods' e.g., travel back home, sending gifts etc.

16. Do you keep in regular contact with anyone at home? (NB: regular = at least once a week)
17. What is your relationship to this/these person/people?
18. How do you keep in contact with them (e.g., phone, email, text, Skype)

19. What is your preferred method of contact?
20. What are your communications like?
21. Are they satisfied with your interactions with person/s at home?
 - ➔ Do they request you communicate with them more often?
 - ➔ Do you feel pressured to communicate with them more/less often?
 - ➔ Do you think you contact them enough by your own standards?
 - ➔ Are there times when you would contact home more often? For what reasons?
 - ➔ Are there times where you contact home less often?
 - ➔ In what ways does the time difference impact your replies e.g., are you vigilant or do you prioritize other responsibilities/activities over this?

Leave some time for discussion:

Thank participant for the interview

Debrief on interview purpose/discuss confidentiality again/ask if they have any comments etc.

Interview will be destroyed after use

TAKE NOTES IMMEDIATELY IF PARTICIPANT REQUESTED NO WRITING DURING INTERVIEW

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interviewer henceforth referred to as 'E'

Interviewee henceforth referred to as 'M'

*Identifying information has been censored

E: OK, so we've covered confidentiality, and any questions or issues that you did not have, and we will now, we will start. So I'll read you my broader research aim, my specific aim within the broader research area. So I aim to explore the effects of instant communication amongst study abroad student at UWA, or in your case, um, international students. So specifically I will focus on the tension between the desire to create a distance between the self and home, and the expectations of continually keeping in contact with home because of the ease of instant communication. So my main aim to talk to you today is about I mean, do you use, do you, (M: pardon?) what do you use?

M: You mean social media?

E: yep

M: Facebook, social media, facetime, Skype, text message

E: Yeah, so, quite a lot. So have you even felt, um, there's a pressure to continuously, especially when you first came here, there's a pressure to keep in contact with home?

M: Yes, and there still is. Um, it feels like sometimes if you're not continuously being in touch with them, they feel like, it feels like they think you're, not thinking about them, wanting to communicate, it's like you've moved to a different country, you don't care anymore, so there's that constant need to keep in touch.

E: ah ok, so who do you keep in contact with at home?

M: Me brother (*E: your brother mainly?*) yeah my brother, and one of me grandparents. My brother's got a niece, sorry my brother has a daughter, so I've got a

niece, so she's only 3. So, if I don't, feels like if I don't continuously keep in contact with her at least once a week, I'm scared in case she'll forget who I am.

E: ah, yes, that's fair enough

M: Speak to my grandparents, oh sorry I telephone as well, I do telephone me eldest grandparent, who's 85, cos she's on her own. And I did promise her at Christmas when I did go home, that I'd keep more contact with her (*E: yeah*) at least once a week, cos that's all she wants, is to hear, is my voice. (*E: yeah*)

Eh, me nana, who's my mam's mam, she facetimes us nearly every day or every other day, and that's just because she's nosey (*E: laughs*), she wants to know what's going on

E: She wants to know what's happening all the time!

M: (*laughs*) yeah, and every Sunday we facetime my brother, but he's a bit huffy so he might not always answer, depends on what mood he's in because he wants to move to Australia, but his wife won't so there's that bit of tension.

E: OK, so um, with things, do you have, like, planned times to keep in contact or is it sort of on the fly?

M: It's usually a Monday or a Tuesday night I ring my grandma, who's my dad's mam, me nana, usually when she gets up, so in the UK, that's around 7 or 8'o clock UK time, so that's about 4 or 5 here

E: Yeah, I have a grandmother in Market Harborough....which is in the middle somewhere (laughs)

M: and me brother, it's around about 5-6 0'clock on a Sunday evening here (but he doesn't always answer)

E: ok. so, is there a way your grandparents have a preference for you to contact them, like do they prefer you to contact them on the phone, or...?

M: me grandma prefers us to speak with her on the phone, that's the only way to communicate with her, she doesn't have internet, me nana, because she has an ipad, she likes to be able to speak and see at the same time, that's one of her concerns, she wants to see if anything's changed, facetime obviously with me brother obviously and me niece so (his daughter) can see, and she can...

E: so it's sort of like being with you, but not

M: Yeah

E: mmm cool, so, just for my notes, from what country did you come from?

M: The UK

E: The UK, and you're studying education

M: yes

E: And why are you doing education?

M: Always wanted to be a teacher, so always wanted to do the UK equivalent of my PGCE, um, but I've always wanted to have me masters, and the fact that I could do that within one course was a huge advantage

E: yeah, is that why you chose UWA in particular?

M: um, I chose UWA because there's only UWA and Notre Dame that offer that actually offer that course in phys. end, (E: right) and there's other universities that offer that course but not in my major area (e: ah ok), and I didn't want to travel all the way down to Notre dame

E: no (laughs) so, um, do you find the distance between Australia and the UK appealing in that you get a large gap from your, sort of, family, and you can always be, like, independent in a way or do you find it creates more anxiety than freedom?

M: um, I never really think about it, to me it's not on the other side of the world, I think because you can communicate through the likes of facetime it doesn't feel like

you're thousands of miles away, I don't actually, yeah I don't think about it in those terms, like, I think I would be more daunted to move down south in the UK than I would be on the other side of the world

E: that's interesting, so because, um, obviously you mentioned that you use a lot of technologies, Facebook, facetime, calling, texting, probably some other things that I've forgotten, (M: laughs) um, so they say that it creates a small world sort of thing, ok so you mentioned before that there's quite a, moodiness with your brother, and he will talk to you depending on how he feels, um, is that difficult when you, that you literally have a time period in which you can talk to him?

M: it can be very difficult, cos I live here with my mother cos she's got PR here, and (daughter) me niece is our only grandchild, so if we don't get to see her at those times, it can be two, three weeks depending on the mood of me brother before we can speak to her again, so it does get very frustrating and upsetting if we can't... and me brother feels as if I'm not bothered.. it does get upsetting

E: Oh dear, yeah, it's not like your three old niece can like, just do it herself...maybe one day they'll be so advanced

M: yeah, won't be far off!....she'll be there soon

E: So you won't have to worry about it!

E: So um, you came to Australia with your family not primarily to study?

M: no, no, my family moved across.... 1 1/2 or 2 years before I came across, um, I chose Perth because me mother was here and that meant cheap accommodation, but I had actually looked at New Zealand before Australia

E: oh

M: I actually wanted to move abroad and finish my studies before my mam came here, because the way it is, my step-father in the UK got some work here so he came

across, but I had actually looked at studying abroad before that happened been in contact with Canterbury university before I came here

E: So what kind of reasons did you have back then to choose to study abroad?

M: I never wanted to settle where I was, um, I always thought there was more to life than just living in a small fishing village in the north-east of England, and there was nothing holding me back so I thought, why just stop there?

E: Have you ever been to New Zealand?

M: No, but I really want to go!

E: I really recommend it, it's stunning

M: yeah, I've been told (the south) is very similar to the north east of England, it's very diverse with the environment, so I lived next o the causeway, next to the best beaches in England, great walks, and two hours away there was the lake district

E: do you miss any of that?

M: Yes, you don't have any of that in Western Australia, I miss, autumn, orange leaves, orange grounds, snow

E: You have to up a mountain to find snow here!

M: I think that's why New Zealand appealed, because it's everything I want (*E: yeah, no that's fair enough*)....unfortunately they're not taking teachers though, it's quite hard to get into New Zealand at the moment unless you're an Australian citizen

E: So would you want to become an Australian citizen?

M: I certainly want to get PR

E: Permanent residency?

M: Yep, sorry, but I'm not sure about citizenship

E: OK, it's quite difficult to become an Australian citizen isn't it?

M: yeah, the UK has very big issues too (with immigration) anyone can go to the UK because we're part of the European union, they get free housing, money for having children...

E: We had a similar policy, I don't know if it's still in place, getting money each time you had a baby

M: you usually find as well, the people who are say, English, originally British, are the people who mostly abuse that system, but they're too uh, blind to realize it's their own society that's causing the issues and to they blame the other cultures coming in

E: Well, detour (M laughs) so you would continue to study abroad or even live abroad?

M: Definitely, I'm actually looking at Canada at the minute, but Canada aren't taking teachers

E: England's taking teachers!

M: Yeah but I don't want to go back to the UK, last year when I was doing the dip-ed, and they were all like I want to go to the UK, and I was like, really the UK? You want to go to the UK?

E: Yeah, heaps of people do, but again, it's like an adventure to go there like reverse to you, from Australia

M: It's not a nice place (giggles)

E: I've heard this, I've only been there once

M: It's certainly not a nice place to teach, definitely they'll get a lot of teaching experience teaching in the UK, especially those who went to private, non-government schools, it'll be a very big culture shock for them

E: Yeah, so did you experience a large culture shock when you came to Australia?

M: Cos I live north of the river, so it's like Britain

E: aaah, I can't see the divide, I didn't actually know about this north-south thing before I came to UWA, and then I studied anthropology to find out why (laughs)

M: (laughs)

E: OK....., so, we've covered quite a lot just in conversation, so how long have you actually been here for now?

M: (replies)

E: OK, so 30 months

M: No sorry thir-teen months

E: Oh sorry, so just over a year (M: yeah), so would you feel like you'd be able to settle in Australia because of your experiences here, or...?

M: Yeah

*E: So what reasons would that be for? *Pause* not just because you can live here and have still contact with, sort of your family at home?.....*

*M: *Pause**

E: Take all the time you need

M: Um, It's very much like the UK to be able to settle, I think, I suppose the way I look at it is I'm actually quite lucky to be from the UK, I think it's easier to settle because I'm from the UK, maybe easier to settle than some other nationalities

E: Yeah I think the main people here in WA are English and South Africans, and kiwis, I mean New Zealanders

M: Yeah,

E: Um, so, do your family, your families, you grandmothers and your brother for example, what were their opinions on your decision to come and study abroad here?

M: my brother thought it was the best thing I could do because there's nothing in the UK for us, and me nana felt the same, that's me mother's mam um, me grandma was devastated,

E: Oh, why? Do you mind me asking, you don't have to answer

M: No, cos I was leaving her, she was gonna lose us, I think deep down she knew it was a good thing, but because of her age, I think she felt, cos I'm the youngest

E: How old are you sorry?

M: 31, cos I'm her youngest granddaughter

E: ah

M: so I think she just felt like, me grandma's, she likes family very close, obviously she thinks it's great, and she tells everyone at the hairdressers about her granddaughter who lives in Australia rang her this week, and she's been here before, so she knows it's a lovely country and she loved it here, um, and I think it was just a bit of a shock, for her especially at that age

E: Do you mind me asking how old she is?

M: 85

E: Yeah that's significant

M: Yeah, well, we'd, we'd just lost me granddad, and he was..., and she took that very, very hard, and I think she just thought, everyone was taking a distance from her, she struggled with that a bit but as long as I ring her every week she's happy

E: Yeah Katie and I are, we're on the younger end of the grandchildren

M: Yeah and on my mam's side, my nana has nearly 30 grandchildren, great-grandchildren combined (*E: wow*) so it's quite different, but with me nana, I'm the closest one to her, so when I went back home to the UK at Christmas I stayed with me nana, and out of the ones that could possibly move away, I was the one that she cried,

I think because we spent a lot of time together, then she came over a few months ago to visit, and cried at the station

E: I'm extremely impressed an elderly person came across

M: My nana is not your normal 75 year old, of she's certainly not, she's got no grey hair, no health complications, people mistake her for my mother

E: Wow! My grandparents are all in their 80's and have a lot of health problems

M: Yeah, my grandma's your typical, little, grey haired and has a lot of health issues, whereas me nana is complete opposite

E: Let's hope you get your nana's genes

M: Yeah (laughs)

E: So what kind of impact did your grandmother's reluctance have on your decision if it had any?

M: I felt guilty, but it didn't stop...

E: Is that because of the ways you can easily contact her, would that be a factor, in your, sort of, or was it just a necessity to come out here?

M: Sorry...?

E: Sorry, rephrase, so your grandmother's reluctance didn't have an effect on your decision, was that because, one it was a necessity for you or because you can easily keep in contact with her?

M: Easy cos I can still keep in contact with her, maybe selfish because I was doing this for meself,

E: That's a good thing though, you have to do things, so what about friends, has that impacted on your decision

M: I've still got me two best friends in the UK, one's just had a baby and she was absolutely devastated but excited as well at the same time, really happy I was doing something, just getting out there

E: So how do you keep in contact with her?

M: Mostly through Facebook, um, she hasn't gotten herself up with the times, so she doesn't have an iPhone, so.... (laughs)

E: So it always has to be with a computer

M: Yeah,..... so she was ecstatic but really upset at the same time, you see she's got a lot of close friends in the UK, she's married with kids and all her friends are married with kids and I'm the only one not, so she knew it was a good thing for me to get away, and where we're from is not the be all end all, and she's even talking about coming to visit, even with her husband and two kids. And my other best friend, I haven't spoken to him in a while actually, he's really happy for what I've done, and he wants to come across as well in three years in time to watch the ashes, that was our 4 year plan, and all my friends were really supportive, it was a bit of a shock, when I said I'm definitely definitely going because people don't think you'll actually do it, but I did actually go through with what I wanted to do, sold my property and gave up everything to come across

E: Do you still feel that way, that you've given up everything to come here?

M: Yeah, I gave up everything, I was actually sitting with me mam this morning, I gave up my beautiful flat, mini cooper, to live in a room with my mam

E: You make it sound so bad!

M: Yeah, but it's because I had worked so hard to get what I had, and now it's about starting again

E: Yeah, I see... are you enjoying the course?

M: Yeah, but its not the most easy university to keep in contact with, especially as an international student, they look at you and see you're white and assume you'll be okay

E: I actually think they give you more help if you're a non-English speaker, but if you can speak English they assume you're fine

M: I actually tried to enroll in units that didn't exist,

E: yeah we changed our structure, maybe that's what that was, to be more like the eastern states.....you may have noticed WA is normally a few years behind the rest of Australia

M: Well I applied for the masters of teaching, but it was a different unit code, so they hadn't sent us any information, the unit codes, the terminology is very different and I didn't know what different things meant, in the UK you don't choose your major/minor, you followed a certain course, so getting used to terminology, and some people couldn't understand a word I was saying, and I'm saying I'm confused with this and they would say I don't know what you're talking about, id been in the country for 2 weeks when I started, and I was getting no help from anybody, they're like you haven't enrolled in this and I was like I don't know what you're asking, that's not the terminology they use in the UK

E: Yeah even between universities in Australia the terminology can be different

M: Yeah, your expectations are different

E: So we've actually been talking about negatives, can we go back to positives?

M: (laughs) yeah,

E: So like, your expectations on living in Australia, what have you been finding?

M: Yeah, it's been quite easy, I know I'm not as strong academically as some other people, but I think with me having a bit of life experience, I can communicate more in schools, like the way I can communicate with other people...

E: Yeah, I think that's important in teaching, you have this whole life before and you can bring that into the classroom,

M: yeah

E: So have you encountered anything unexpected, because obviously you're come from a pretty similar culture,

M: Well people on the roads are a bit concerning, but that's about it

E: (laughs) yeah Perth drivers are notorious for not being able to merge

M: They don't know how to say thank you if you actually give way or let them out of a parking space...

E: (laughs) yeah you're not alone in experiencing this. Um, ok so back to hen you said contact with your niece depends on your brother, is there any times where you can't contact your family at home, like do you prioritise other things?

M: Yeah if I go out on a Sunday afternoon, I try to ring him on the Saturday, but then he gets upset if he knows I'm going out

E: How about with your grandmothers?

M: They're very understanding, my grandmother she knows I haven't rang her on the Monday Tuesday ill ring her some point through out the week, I know when she's going to be around

E: So would you ever, um, sort of, would you actually not, sort of, participate in your social life here to contact home?

M: No

E: That's good

M: At the end of the day I live here and I have to make a life here, and sometimes I think that's difficult for him to accept. Some things me mam an I don't put things on Facebook because we know it upsets me brother to know we're doing stuff, so he will talk to us less, and it opens our eyes to how small you can live within the UK, because he goes to work all week, and he comes home on the weekend and his daughter, and I know he wants to break free from that little world but he doesn't and he takes that out on me and me mam.

E: Would you say, obviously you don't have to answer the question, has your relationship with your brother deteriorated because of this?

M: yes, me and me brother were extremely extremely close, and since I've been here it's almost nonexistent, since I've moved here, our relationships deteriorated

E: Like you were saying before, you have to do what you want, can't always be pleasing everyone else

M: I think it's like, I know he's happy I've done it but he's a bit jealous because he was always the one who wanted to do it but I'm the one who has, and he's admitted that he sometimes wishes he didn't get married and had his daughter, and me sister in law doesn't do change, just does not accept change at all, won't do change

E: Yeah that's difficult for your brother isn't it. Well I think we've covered everything I wanted to cover. Do you have any questions, you can talk some more if you like

M: No, if you've got everything you need for your research

E: So just in line with ethics, this is used for this study, your identity will be remained confidential, I will destroy evidence after I'm done with this interview, if you want I can even email you my little report, so yea if you change your mind you can just email me, or if you want to check something you've said that you don't want to go into the report

M: I wouldn't have spoken about it if I didn't want to it to

E: Yeah, but if you realize something you don't want in the report you can just email me

M: OK

E: OK thanks, I'll just turn this off

