TRACE Interview Carl 16th October 2013

I What I’ve done with other people is I’ve asked them to start by thinking about a day recently that you would have called a typical day for you and walk through that day and tell me the people that you met and the people that you interacted with maybe online or by telephone or face to face

P Hmm yes, you remember I said in my other, hmm, I didn’t think I’d be an awful lot of use to you in this study

I Yeah

P Yeah, that’s because I don’t generally get out and about and meet a lot of people so a typical day for me would be spent, if I’m not out doing some shopping, in which case if I am doing some shopping then you know, whoever I meet at the bus stop or in the shops they’re the people I talk to, otherwise I’d be at home and doing my usual tasks around the house and I spend a lot of my time online

I Right, OK, and do you have regular people that you make contact with online ?

P No, what I tend to do is, I mean I do go to DropBy but I find that DropBy is a bit disappointing, erm, it’s, I find myself a little bit disadvantaged in as much as I don’t type very well, I type with 2 fingers.

I Yeah, me too

P and I’m at a disadvantage when it comes to instant messaging, I wouldn’t mind skyping with some of the people on there but I’ll never get to that stage because I just don’t do the instant messaging so, erm, so most of my contacts, I post stuff all over DropBy just for the sheer hell of it

I You’ve posted some nice videos on there I remember

P Yeah [chuckles] I post stuff that I like you know [laughs] er yeah and er my basic aim in going on, sorry I’m losing my voice, my basic aim in going online is, going anywhere, is to either be amused or to learn something so the other website that I probably spend more time on than DropBy is Reddit

I OK, yep and are you actively involved in certain subReddit’s or is that you just go onto Reddit and search around?

P There’s a whole load of subgroups that I get information from each day, you know, they appear on my front page and I’ll troll through that lot and see what’s interesting make a comment here, make a comment there, I find that fun

I Yeah that sounds good. And are there people that you are familiar with through that route or is it?

P No, I’m not familiar with people at all. If I’d never had to have gone to work I don’t think I’d ever have got married, I don’t think I’d ever have met anybody, I’m just not naturally sociable, my Myers-Briggs is INTJ.

I Right, I can’t remember what that one means

3.45

P Yeah, OK but the I stands for introvert, so you know I am naturally introverted, I’m not that much into people

I Right

P So sorry this isn’t going to be a bit disappointing for you.

I Well thank you for talking to me

P I’ve tended to be an outlier

I So do you mean, you like being able to come and go in a social group? You’re not keen on being tied to them in any way is that what you mean?

P That is, that puts it in a nutshell, yeah.

I Right, yeah, because it sounds like you..

P I’ve got a Facebook account but I only use it to go online and see what the rest of the family’s doing

I Yeah. And do you have family nearby?

P Oh I’ve got a son in Newhaven, I’ve got a son up in Horsham, I visited him this last weekend and then the rest are spread out – there’s a son in France in Brittany who I ought to see more often because he does come over to this country but doesn’t seem to want to swing by my place

I Right

P I have a son in Australia who was over in the summer, I saw him then and I have a daughter in America who I also saw this summertime when she came over

I Oh OK

P So family’s important. Friends not so much so, I don’t make friends easily. I made friends when I was at work and I’ve lost touch with all of them, you know, as different email accounts have failed so I’ve lost my contacts

I Oh OK yep and so did you have a kind of network of people you knew when you were working ?

P Within the companies that I worked at yes.

I and those have kind of dropped away since you’ve retired?

P yeah, it definitely has

I Yeah, it’s interesting the people that stay in one’s life isn’t it?

P Yeah, there’s a day club in Newhaven that I’ve been sort of thinking about going down and joining and it always seems that there’s always something more important to do than actually get myself off my butt and go down there [laughs]

I Now the next question is about community, hmm, now the word community seem to be used a lot and I just wondered what does the word community mean to you ?

6.49

P Hmm yeah good question, hmm to me community is small groups like a village, I mean when I was, when I lived in the States where I lived, the apartments I lived in I was pretty chatty with all my neighbours and that was nice, it was just nice to be able to say hi, how you getting on, and what’s new, that sort of thing. To me community is gotta be small, it’s containable

I and when you say small do you mean in terms of the number of people ?

P Yeah I think so

I and does distance play a part in that do you think ?

P Hm I just don’t know, I mean DropBy ought to fit into that category but it’s, as regards getting social contact out of it, it’s not working for me

I So you gave me one example there of..

P Yeah another example of community would be if you belong to a church I mean in the States you know its pretty much mandatory so if you don’t you stand out like a sore thumb

I Right

P I stood out like a sore thumb. Hmm but you know, there are other things that one could join that would be a community, I mean maybe if I stay in the country long enough I’ll join some political organisation and get involved in that. Hmm if the Sunday assembly takes off maybe I’ll get involved in that

I Oh what was that?

P Sunday Assembly is a church for atheists

I Oh right. I’ve not heard of that.

P There you go. You’ve learnt something new.

I Oh OK. So you mentioned your experiences in America. Do you have any other memories from when you were younger when you experienced a sense of community, you know, it sticks in your mind as being community

P Yeah I was brought up in a village in West Sussex er Easebourne which is over next to Midhurst. I can distinctly remember being part of a community but it didn’t always involve being inside each other’s pockets all the time it was sort of more of a case of you knew all of the neighbours, the neighbours knew you and you all looked out for each other and you know and pitched in if times were hard if I remember rightly. Hm to a large extent that seems to have gone. Where I live at the moment again very disappointing there’s must be twelve, fourteen flats and I’ve spoken to the lady next door once, said hello, I’ve spoken to my neighbour upstairs once, said hello, and I’ve met up with one other person down a bit further on and said hello and that’s it. Nobody chats, nobody..

I You’ve been there a while have you?

P I’ve been here a year but when I think back to when I was in the States it most certainly didn’t take a year to start talking to people. There are people that I meet at the bus stop on a fairly regular basis you know maybe once a week, maybe a couple of times a week and I’ve got to know them but they’re not always there but they’re more ‘community’ than the people in this block here

11.15

I Coz you have a certain, you see them regularly, that’s like a kind of..

P Yeah, we’ve kind of got used to each other I suppose, we have things to talk about, what we’ve done etc.

I So did you notice a big change when you came back to the UK? The way community operates, is that a big difference?

P It’s difficult to say because it’s changed quite radically. In the States I lived next to my daughter and ex-wife and her husband and we all got along together so, I knew I had company there, I got on pretty well with all my neighbours, so I’d got company there and when I came back to the UK, erm I’d got family here so, you know, I can always go and visit family and what I first thought was, “Wow! I’d be able to go to the pub, the pub’s community sort of, erm then I found out how much beer was (laughs) and I realised I’m not going to be able to afford that community, so that went. So, it’s not really comparing apples to apples.

I No, no

P I mean, in the States I had a car so there was obviously less chance to meet people. Over here I have a bus pass so at least I get to ride around with other people even if we don’t always chat to each other.

I Yeah, yeah, Is that a nice thing? Is it nice to just be amongst people?

P Erm, I don’t like lots and lots of people, no. Erm, I find it nice to be able to chat to the occasional person. Just one person at a bus stop, say something like that, a bit of a chat. I’m not terribly sociable.

I My next question is more about social relationships, not necessarily community but all kinds of social relationships. So who would you say are the most important people in your life at the moment.

P It’s all family. Yeah, erm, I mean I get to SKYPE with those abroad except my son in France who’s married to a bi-polar woman so we’re not really in contact any more, but my son in Australia and my daughter in America, I SKYPE with them. I’m usually in touch with one of them or the other every week. And my son locally I probably see him once a month or so. It’s up to me to get up and go down there and I always think that they’re probably busy, they’ve got a young kiddie less than a year old so their lives are busy and I try not to hamper them and as I say I’ve got a son up in Horsham who I see every two or three months. Those are the most important people to me.

I And it’s really important that you keep in regular contact and know what’s going on and stuff like that. I’ve asked this question before and people say, “well it’s obvious” but what is it about those relationships that makes them so important to you?

P I don’t think you can answer that, can you? I mean they’re family.

I That’s what everybody else said.

P Even my son in France, and you know we don’t seem to be very close at the moment, and my eldest son too, he’s still family and I would still like to my grandson every so often in France but it’s not really happening. But anyway, it’s family. I think I’m quite lucky, out of all of the family I get on pretty well with my son. There’s a couple of daughter-in-laws who I don’t really get on with very well but there you go, you can’t win them all.

I So thinking about how the nature of your relationships has changed during your life, how do you think that has changed, what kind of relationships did you have when you were younger versus the kind of relationships you have now?

P They’ve all been relationships that I’ve been kind of forced into in as much as they would have been school, where I’d have had to go to school and you know because you’re with people you form friendships there and after that it would have been work. At work you have a shared purpose, a common goal etc. and you get to know people there and have relationships with them, I suppose and the ultimate one is you find someone you want to marry. If it weren’t for work I would never have found the two people I did eventually marry. So, you get married and once you get married and once you’ve got kids then that’s it you’re your own kind of little unit, you don’t really need an awful lot of other people. Or I didn’t anyway. I was quite happy with my family. But of course once work finishes, er, then that kind of goes. I’m not married any more, I’m divorced, I’m on my own. Not that that worries me an awful lot, it doesn’t really worry me.

I And has that changed the nature of your relationships with other people as well?

P Well I don’t go to work so I don’t meet people.

I I meant the divorce.

P No, I get on well with, or I like to think I get on well with both my ex wives, especially the second one. The first one who I divorced, yeah obviously there’s a little bit of animosity there even after 30 years. The wife who divorced me I still get on pretty well with her. We were just ultimately not very compatible so, oh dear.

I That happens, yes. So, if you wanted to make new friends at this point in your life, what do you think you would do?

P First of all, I think I’d go down to the local day centre because we share a town. And after that I’d try and join a political group because then we’d have a shared bond in the politics that we believe in. And then as I said before if the Sunday assembly started up, I’d join that. In California they used to have new age churches and I went to one or two of them. They were fun, just so long as someone expects me to believe in God, you know! I’d be quite happy. So, it’s looking for people with at least the same interests as me, and I’ve got some strange interests so it’s going to be difficult to find friends. I’d probably find them more online.

I Is that what you tend to do these days, are you expecting to find more like minded people online?

P Oh yeah, there’s a lot more like minded people online, especially on Reddit.

I I suppose it’s easy to sort of describe and design your opinions and attitudes online, isn’t it? Something like Reddit, it’s setup to do that, isn’t t?

P Well, it’s grown, it’s evolved into that. It’s been pretty successful, a lot more successful than Dig for instance.

I No, I didn’t get into that one either.

P No, I didn’t either. About 4 years ago I joined Reddit and never looked back. Unless I’m away from my computer altogether, like visiting somebody there’s never a day that I do not go on Reddit.

I Ok, so is that your most regular online destination.

P Yes. As I say Facebook would be every 3 days or so.

I And do you use other kinds of technologies to contact people, like mobile phones?

P No, I don’t like mobile phones a lot. I haven’t got a phone that’s very good for texting. I haven’t got into smartphones yet. If I did maybe then I’d get into using the phone. I got bitten pretty badly when I was in the States using a mobile and I built up quite a bill when I was looking for a job talking to head hunters and after that I’ve been very very wary of cell phones. I have a pay-as-you-go, so I keep my conversations very brief. I don’t text, that’s another thing I don’t use.

I So, you’re not keen on that kind of text interaction, you’d much rather have voice. Although I suppose Reddit is text?

P Yes, but it’s not Instant messaging it’s the sort of thing where I can respond, go off look at other things, look at my top right hand corner and see if there’s a little red/orange envelope and if there is then I can respond to that and if there isn’t, fair enough, the day just keeps on going. With Dropby, for instance, you’ve got this weird system where you can either be available, busy or visible and there are a couple of times when I first joined that I didn’t realise this and I left it on available and people would contact me and I’d not even realised they had contacted me and hours later I’d find this comment and think, “Oh, my God”. I would have left Dropby site and gone off to Reddit or something else and then come back and found that somebody had been trying to talk to me and felt really, really guilty about that which meant the conversation just didn’t go anywhere because I’d been on Dropby and sort of just, you know, wait and wait and wait. The traffic is very limited through there.

I Do you think that is a design issue or is it something to do with the culture of Dropby?

P I actually don’t know. As I say they’ve got the facility for doing video chat, it’s just that they don’t tell you how to use it. It’s not in the instructions how to use it and until I get to use texting I don’t think I’ll ever use it. Or even find out how to use it. I could ask Mary B who organises the site, “Hey, how do I use videoconferencing.”

I Yes, because I think you probably would take to that quite easily I would have thought.

P Well, I’d like that because, as I say, I use SKYPE, and SKYPE is fun, but remember SKYPE is free. Whatever I use, it’s got to be free or very near to free.

I So, do you use SKYPE a lot? You said you use it for contacting your daughter?

P Only for contacting my daughters in Australia and America. Nobody else.

I Did it take you long to get used to using SKYPE? Because it’s a different way of communicating, isn’t it?

P It’s pretty darn simple. If you’ve got a good connection, you just talk to each other! And you can see each other on the screen. Occasionally you talk over each other but then you do that in normal conversation anyway, so you just back off and start again. It’s very good. It’s easy. I like it.

I And do you have a preference if you’re contacting your kids about how you contact them? Would you rather stick to on the phone, or SKYPE?

P I would prefer to SKYPE but 3 out of 5 aren’t very keen on it, so if they’re not keen on it, then it doesn’t matter what I do, I can jump up and down and scream it won’ make any difference!

I Ok. And what’s their objection to SKYPE?

P I think it’s pure laziness. My grandson, in France, has SKYPE. He has SKYPE and he’s on my list of SKYPE people and we’ve SKYPED a couple of times but the last time I SKYPED him he was in the middle of some very intense online game with his French compadres and, you know, I didn’t get an awful lot of conversation out of him.

I So he was playing that at the same time?

P Yes, he was trying to play at the same time, little thumbs going up and down like mad and very fixed expression on his face, you know, never mind.

I That must have been an odd conversation.

P It was, yes. My two sons over here in England, they don’t SKYPE much.

I It doesn’t seem to have taken off much as a local form of communication, does it, strangely.

P No, to be fair, I think my two sons over here have busy lives, you know. My son in Horsham has 2 children who are very, very demanding. And my son here in Newhaven he’s just got a new baby, so that’s pretty much occupying them at the moment.

I So the easiest thing is to talk on the phone or?

P Yeah, it would be, yes.

I Are there people that you know nearby that you….You’ve talked about people at the bus stop. Are there other people that you make contact with through the phone? Do you have those kinds of contacts nearby?

P No, I don’t no.

I So, when you go online for instance, have you made any friends when going on the internet? Has that been a source of social contact?

P No, not really. There are people on Dropby, and I know all of their names but there’s no way I’d call them friends. They are just people I know. And Reddit has got such a vast user base, no, I don’t have any friends there.

I Are they perhaps people, or usernames that you’re familiar with but you don’t really know anything about them?

P The forums that I’m on have so many members to them that there’s no way I’m going to recognise them. Plus the fact people quite often use throw away accounts anyway.

I Earlier on we were talking about community. Do you think community is something that can exist in that king of online space or in other online spaces?

P If you have the interest, some sort of burning interest I’m sure that community could exist. I’m thinking of things I watched online, like there was a great little online short programme on the Juggloes. They are followers of Insane Cloud Possy, a musical group. They are totally out there, on their own but they had their own little community and that could be, a lot of it could be online, you know you go to a forum and you chat to people. If there were other things that I was that interested in, that involved, then sure, maybe I’d join a forum online and I could imagine then that I could get involved and I could become friends with people online.

I For those people involved, like the Juggalos, is this a kind of obsession for them?

P I suppose so, but it’s still community for them. And it’s shared interest, isn’t it, that’s the point I was trying to make. Not necessarily the Juggalos, they were just the thing that sprang to mind. It’s a matter of having a deep enough interest in something, I suppose and I guess I don’t have a really, really deep enough interest in something that I would go out and join it.

I So, in principle, you think that community is something that could exist online but that you’re not particularly interested in, for you.

P Well, I haven’t found it yet, put it that way.

I And how about social networking, so things like Facebook, YouTube?

P No, no I dislike Facebook. My browser I use is Firefox and Firefox has a neat little extension that you can use to block people from tracking you online and you know, when I first got it I’d go and look and see who was tracking me and for most sites, no for the search engine I use nobody was tracking me. If you look at Facebook and 17 different people were tracking me so, no, I don’t like Facebook. I think Facebook is stupid, I think it’s evil quite frankly, erm, it lies, it keeps telling me, ‘so and so has been trying to contact you’ and then when I do go on there; I did in the past before I realised this was a scam. You know it says ‘so and so wants to be friends with you’. Yeah right! It’s just that they happen to be on the same, the same email list as somebody else. You know, they picked my name out of that, so no, I really, really do not like Facebook. As I say I use it to find out what’s the latest happening with my son up in Horsham and my daughter over in America. They put photographs on there and stuff like that. Erm, Twitter I might use if I had the sort of mind that could condense stuff down to just a few words but I tend to be a little bit verbose, I’m afraid. Any others I can’t think of? I use Pinterest, I think it’s quite neat because it fits what I want and that is I either want to learn things or I want to be amused, and that works for me.

I And it’s a different kind of engagement with things like Facebook, isn’t it?

P Oh, it definitely is. I mean, are there any others I should be interested in or not?

I YouTube?

P Oh, YouTube I go to. I use YouTube quite a lot because I don’t have a TV, so I tend to watch documentaries in the evening and I go on to documentaries ……….and usually people have got on there some pretty good stuff that’s worth watching.

I Ok, so they put links on to YouTube

P Yes, and I watch those. Yes, that’s good.

I And I suppose you don’t have to necessarily have to engage with that as a community to use YouTube, it’s a resource as well, isn’t it? So, you said a couple of your kids use Facebook, what do you think about the way they use it?

P My daughter is probably the most typical of the users. She uses it just to make announcements to her friends about what she’s doing in Uni, she posts pictures on there so it’s like a big scrapbook for her. My daughter up in Horsham, she has quite a few local friends on it and, you know, they post the most inane things I must admit. You know, and get back equally inane comments.

I So is it something that’s nice to see what they’re up to?

P Oh, for me, it’s good to find out how the family is, whether it’s well and all the rest of it.

I But you don’t contribute?

P Oh, I tried in the beginning, then realised nobody was interested and there weren’t any comments on it, so I gave up on that. Pause. Our Documentaries has got 145,346 different readers, so you know when you ask questions like, “do you get to know people on Reddit”, no, it’s like a small town!

I It’s like going to a football stadium and saying did you get to know anyone today (laughs). Fair enough, I take your point. Ok, that’s about all the questions I had for the study. Is there anything that you thought I was going to ask you about that I haven’t mentioned?

P No, not really, well, can I ask you some questions?

I Of course.

P What is the object of this exercise? What do you want to get out of this?

I For a long time I’ve been involved in doing research in how new technologies like the Internet, and other things, support the ageing process. For me, it’s about trying to figure out what people would want these technologies to do as opposed what they’ve been designed, by someone in their 20’s, to do and try and present some of this back to the design community and say what people would really like is this, this and this. So, I’m working with some people at Sussex University who are involved in site design and there’s a company in Brighton I also do some work with, who do apps for….

P But don’t you feel this is a problem that’s naturally going to go away anyway? I mean I started using a computer first of all because I had use at work and I first started using the Internet about 10 years after I started using the computer, I suppose, about mid 90’s, so I feel myself very lucky; I’ve been involved in it for a long time. Now, my grandkids they are going to be brought up with it so when they get to be old, they are not going to have a problem with interfacing with it. At the moment it’s just ……people have their own problems.

I I’m not sure. I think there’s an ongoing kind of push to constantly develop new technologies.

P I agree with that. I must admit there are times when I feel that I’m getting left behind.

I So, I’m not sure that there won’t be more technologies when I’m older that I won’t see that are appropriate to who I am, that don’t add anything to my life, but I guess I think that if we can …..

P ……to kind of think of that though isn’t it?

I And I think there’s something that we lose by only having certain generations involved in the Internet.

P Whoa, whoa, whoa! I go on to Reddit. The sort of age group on there is 18-30 in the main and it tails off. I mean if was stupid enough to put down my age on there I mean, people would think, ‘what an old fogey’, because they don’t know how old I am I can read everything they’re talking about; I’ve got a very good grip with what’s going on with the younger generation, I think, Reddit is a reasonable example of that. So, hey, I don’t see a problem.

I I think what you’re doing sounds, you know, there need to be more people like you involved in giving voice to different ways of seeing the world, I suppose that’s part of my concern as well, that we end up with……I don’t know whether you’ve heard of this guy on YouTube who calls himself Geriatric 1927, have you heard of him?

P I haven’t, but I’ll write that down and I can go and look it up.

I I did some work with him where I was doing some research and I discovered he was making these videos and he ended up doing his life story on YouTube and it was a bit of a phenomenon on YouTube for a while because the kids thought he was absolutely fantastic because he had a story to tell and most of the kids on there, although they are very clever, they can make really nice videos, they didn’t really have a story to tell. And so I found that fascinating that this older guy going on there, just being himself, was picked up by these kids as something really authentic and something that they weren’t getting in their day to day interactions. So, it’s that kind of thing, that got me thinking, ‘what are we losing?’, all of these people who just don’t have a voice on the internet. So, in a small way I’m trying to make that to the fore, if that makes sense.

P Yep.

I I just wondered, would you be interested in coming to the Newhaven group if I em….do you know that it meets every month?

P I did not know that.

I So there’s a group of about a dozen of us and we meet once a month. It used to be the first Monday of the month and the guy who kind of organises the dates, he sends around an email and if you’re interested, what I’ll do is get him to put your email on the list and he’ll tell you when it’s on next.

P Is it generally on during the day

I Yes, it’s usually 10-12 at the Hillcrest.

P Yes, I could do that. The bus goes down fairly near to that and as long as the weather is not too inclement, I’d like to do that.

I Oh, that would be lovely, Carl, it would be nice to meet you. Ok, I don’t think I’ve got your email address.

P Ok, it’s all lower case it’s [Carllockyer@yahoo.com](mailto:colinlockyer@yahoo.com)

I Right

P You didn’t say ‘dot’ in the middle did you?

I No, no I didn’t.

P Ok, so if I pass it on to Bill who’s the guy who…