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START AUDIO

Interviewer: Okay. I’ve pressed the right button now. So yes, take a look through that for a moment while I set up. It actually folds out as well, if you want to have a look.

So yes, the folded-out bit is, like I said in the email, inferences that we’re able to make about you based on what you told us you read over a two-week period. I mean as part of the interview, we will probably just talk about these things as well, but I just wanted to give you a chance to have a look while I set up.

Okay, we’ll get started if you’re happy. I should have said, you know, do you have any questions about anything we’ve done so far or what we’re doing today?

Corina: No. No, you can crack on.

Interviewer: Good. Yes, so today is basically just a straight interview, I ask questions, hopefully a bit more of a kind of discussion, but essentially me asking questions and hoping you can answer them. So I’m just going to start straightaway now.

So one of the things in this book, it shows you the times of day that you checked the news. It’s obviously the time of day you sent us stuff actually. So the first thing I wanted to ask is does that accurately show the times you do read online news?

Corina: Yes, definitely. I’ll be honest, I’m a bit surprised that it says afternoon quite so much, because if you had asked me, I would have said it was evening time that I spend- well it looks quite evenly split between evening and afternoon, but it may be that it’s more my days that I don’t work that I spend time on an afternoon scrolling rather than on the days I’m working.

Interviewer: So, as you’ve started doing, what I was going to ask you do first is, if this does kind of accurately reflect, could you maybe just talk through what it shows and- you know, we did capture some of this stuff, it’s not on the book, but like where you’re accessing news at these different times, what you’re doing, kind of typical thing?

Corina: Yes, so I think I typically- the majority of time I probably spend on it is on an evening, once I’ve got the kids to bed and I’ve sat down on the sofa. I’ve normally popped the TV on and I just start scrolling through the day’s news or through social media.

Interviewer: On a mobile phone?

Corina: On a mobile phone, yes. I think I access everything through a mobile phone, it’s quite unusual for me to use a computer for news, I’d say. Everything’s done on my phone. I don’t even use a tablet anymore actually. So yes, that’s the most common time and how I do it. Sometimes it will be as I’m having my lunch or my breakfast, I’ll flick on, again on my phone to look at things.

And again if I’ve got- I’ve got young children so if I have (Laughter) late-night wakeups, I’ll often sit reading things whilst I’m trying to get the children back to sleep and the like. And again, before I go to bed, I often lie in bed and look at articles or social media and read them. So I think that’s [right 0:03:49].

Interviewer: So you, kind of, talked about a pattern and a trend which you captured over that two-week period. Do you think that kind of trend or pattern that you’ve had has changed over time? So if we think about that over a bigger period of time.

Corina: Erm… I’m trying to think. I’m not sure- I guess I mean how long a period of time are we talking?

Interviewer: I just mean, you know, the last few months, year, or so. Maybe just, you know, a longer period of time.

Corina: Well, I was more thinking, sort of, over the years. (Laughter) It has obviously definitely changed. I’m trying to think when I started using Twitter more for news and started to scroll… One of the changes definitely- I’m talking probably over a five-year period, is to using apps on my phone for BBC News, Guardian News, rather than using a website per se.

So I rarely would look on my computer now on a website, whereas probably a couple of years ago actually, on my lunch break, I probably would have sat and read the BBC News website (Laughter) on my lunch break or whatever. Whereas now if I was doing that at lunchtime, I would do it on my phone using the app rather than using the website, so that has definitely changed in terms of that mechanism of looking at it.

Interviewer: Okay. And within that same context, do you find you’re someone that reads the whole article a lot of the time, or do you find yourself looking at some headlines, parts of articles?

Corina: It’s probably 50/50, whether I look at a full article or not, depending on interest or whether I get distracted by (Laughter) something else during it, and whether I go back and finish it. I tend to read longer articles, I think, before bed. I know that I tend to pick, sort of, a longer article and that helps us go off to sleep, reading something longer. Whereas I think a lot of the stuff I get on Twitter, it’s often- you’re just reading headlines and I might follow a link and just flick through the first paragraph or two, and then go back to scrolling through it.

Interviewer: Is that to make a decision on whether you think it’s an interesting thing?

Corina: Yes, often.

Interviewer: Or is that you going, “I know that now, next story, I know that?”

Corina: Yes, or it’s- often with Twitter it’s more, “What are they actually linking to…” It’s like validating what I’m seeing, I think, or what somebody’s telling me they’re putting a link in there, I guess. Often with Twitter, obviously it’s just people shouting them out (Laughter) and you get everyone’s opinions and commentary rather than full-on, full-size articles.

Interviewer: Yes. So we’ll come back to that verifying in a short while, but just to stay on the topic, so on page seven, the blue circles represent what we have worked out are your main interests, or at least over a two-week period of time. So first of all, do you think these are- do these seem about right? And second of all, why do you think you do gravitate towards these topics or issues?

Corina: Yes, so I’ve got political news and controversies in there, which I was expecting to see, (Laughter) I think I look at quite a lot of that. There’s obviously crime and legal matters, international conflicts, healthcare system issues, environmental issues and social issues. I feel like they’re all- they feel like quite serious issues, there’s not a lot of light-hearted, (Laughter) like lifestyle, you know, things in there. Which I’m not surprised about, I guess. Yes, it seems to reflect quite well.

Are the different circle sizes- I mean they’re all the same size on mine. Were they meant to represent-

Interviewer: Yes, for some people, some were different- I mean with some people, there weren’t any real, kind of, dominant topics, or these are probably almost just like some of the things you read at equal amounts of time, yes.

Corina: Yes. That’s what I was just thinking… I mean- yes, I thought maybe the political news would be a larger one and environmental issues would probably be smaller, but I guess it depends on probably what’s been on the news over that two-week period as to whether- yes, how you classify things and how you’ve pulled them out. But yes, they seem to be quite indicative.

Interviewer: So you’re talking about the seriousness of these topics etc. Why do you think- to go back to that question, what do you think gravitates you towards these topics?

Corina: Erm, I think at the moment it’s because I’m angry about a lot of what’s going in the country. I think at different periods of time, going back to that [time 0:09:31], I may not have been quite so interested in some of these topics, areas. So things like the environmental issues, you know, some of the stuff going on with the rivers recently, like… You know, I’m annoyed about it so therefore I’m reading more about it.

So with the healthcare system issues, again, I’m annoyed about what’s going on so I’m probably reading more about it. And I think there are a lot of things just going on within the country at the moment which I’m angry about, so I’m therefore reading more about it rather than reading more light-hearted (Laughter) things, which are more, I guess, relaxed. (Laughter)

Interviewer: And- okay, I think we’ll come back to that when we start talking about the way you respond to news. But just to keep with the kind of simple questions for now, so we’ve looked at the topics you’ve read and the times of day you read. So I want to just ask you now, how often do you think you encounter online news that you suspect is fake or misleading?

Corina: I imagine I encounter some every day. How much of a proportion of that… I mean it’s all on Twitter, isn’t it, where there- I think the BBC and the Guardian are my other two sources and I trust what they say, I don’t think they would be misleading, per se. Whereas on Twitter, I think there are probably a lot of misleading articles on there. So I imagine every day I am probably encountering something on there which isn’t quite accurate.

Interviewer: Okay, so what sort of thing- so you’re saying on a daily basis, you encounter these suspicious-

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: What would prompt you to check the accuracy of something in news stories that you encounter? Or what would be the triggers to make you not trust them, I suppose could be the other side of that?

Corina: I think it depends on whether I care enough to- whether I just, kind of, dismiss something and think, “Oh that’s probably not true,” and just carry on scrolling, as I do, or whether I think, “Oh, that doesn’t sound quite right.” And I think I tend to- if I think, “Oh something doesn’t sound quite right,” or I’ve not heard- it’s more, “I’ve not heard that from somewhere else,” whereas I kind of think because I look at other news websites, I expect to hear things or see things on them which marry up with what I see on social media.

I think that’s normally when I’m a bit suspicious, if I haven’t seen anything in the mainstream media but see something mentioned on Twitter, that’s when I think, “Oh that doesn’t sound right, that doesn’t match up with other things that I’ve read.” And I guess that’s kind of the way that I’m likely to check it, is to separately then go onto those other websites- or not- well, the apps, the other apps, and I see, “Oh actually, are they writing anything about it? Or is it just something new that’s cropped up?”

Interviewer: Okay. So you’ve mentioned that as a method of verification, you might go to… I’m assuming, by the stuff I’ve got in front of me, from your book, the Guardian and the BBC apps. So you see a story and you go to check one or two of those sources, and if they’re also talking about it, that’s fine.

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. So two things: if they’re not, is that the end of your verification process, “That’s now fake?” And also, what other methods or things do you do to verify?

Corina: Again it comes down to interest, likely. (Laughter) If it’s not of interest to me, that probably is the end of my investigation and I kind of just forget about it or dismiss it. Or potentially I might… It depends what it is. I might mention to my husband, “Somebody on Twitter was saying this.” You know, talk about it or get somebody else’s take on it.

I guess on Twitter, it’s sometimes actually looking at the tweet and reading the other comments below it, or who else is sharing it. Or looking at some of the hashtags and things like that to see who else is talking about it and whether they are, I guess, names that I recognise, i.e. they’re public figures that I recognise as being genuine people I guess, or whether it’s just a random account that I’ve never- well, they’re not, like, an accountable account, if that makes sense. You know, to me, I don’t know who it is who’s saying it and therefore… Whereas if someone who I know, I recognise as a public figure, is saying it then I’m more likely to leave it.

Interviewer: So you’ve talked about finding other people talking about something just to verify its truth, but have you ever intentionally sought out news or information to cross-reference some information you’ve read? So rather than the whole topic, have you ever been to another source to cross-reference something?

Corina: Beyond going to the other news apps?

Interviewer: Well including that, I would say.

Corina: Yes, so I’d say I go to the other news apps to cross-reference things, but beyond that, I don’t think I’ve sought out any… I can’t think of how I would have sought out other information really.

Interviewer: Okay. So you’ve told us where you would first go to double-check a piece of information you see on the news. On top of this, have you ever used specific fact-checking sources? Like… What are they called? FactCheck.org, things like that?

Corina: No, I’ve never used one of them.

Interviewer: Okay. So we’ve also got the actions that you shared you did, and the different ways you responded to messages. So some of that was discussing and… I wonder just have you ever… Have you ever made a decision or performed some kind of action directly based on something you’ve read as a kind of online news or information?

Corina: No. I think the thing I noticed when I was doing this is with a lot of the things I read, I don’t do anything with them. I might discuss some of them with, you know, my husband or a friend or a colleague or something, after the event, but it might be something I discussed with them a week later or… You know, it's not necessarily an immediate discussion or, “I’ve got to have this conversation with somebody about this,” or share it with somebody and talk to them about it. I don’t know what that says about me, but that’s just my- I guess the way I interact with it.

So I don’t think… With a lot of the information that I think I see online, it kind of informs my opinions and what I think about things, but I don’t know necessarily what actions (Laughter) I then take over them to… Yes, to sit there feeling angry or, you know, happy or whatever it is about an article.

Interviewer: So do you ever… It doesn’t really show in here, but do you ever share things you’ve read online with other people?

Corina: Very rarely. It’s just not something I’m in the habit of doing.

Interviewer: So what factors might prompt you to share something on those rare occasions?

Corina: So I think if I’d been discussing something with someone that day or previously and then saw something relevant, I then might send it on, you know, like say, “Oh yes, we were talking about this earlier, have you seen this?” Or whatever. So that would be, I guess, the times that I would share it. And it would normally be based on a recent conversation with somebody that would prompt me to share something connected to what we had been discussing.

Interviewer: Good. When I asked you what kind of actions you’ve done, you said you tend to read news as a kind of individual activity.

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: So have you ever changed your mind about an issue or a person or a topic based on something you’ve read online?

Corina: Erm, I would like to answer yes to that. (Laughter) I would like to think that I’m open enough to change my mind about things. Have I… I’m trying to think if I can think of an example when I have, and I can’t. I would like to think that if I read something and it contradicted what I had initially thought, that it would change my mind or would prompt me to look further into a subject to see whether it changed my mind.

It’s that thing of, you select where you read your news, don’t you? To be biased (Laughter) towards what you want to see anyway. You’re in your little Twitter world where you’re following people and they just show you more of what you want to see, don’t they? Rather than actually challenging you, is the issue, isn’t it? You know, I see stuff which confirms what I already thing rather than necessarily coming across things which maybe challenge what I think.

I’m trying to think- I’m sure there was a recent article that I’d read actually, because I remember having a chat with my husband about, but I couldn’t tell you what the topic was. It definitely phrased something in a different way to how I had ever previously thought about it, and I remember having a conversation with my husband and saying, “Have you thought about this and this approach?” Because yes, I’d read something else and it had changed my mind. But given that I can’t remember what the topic of the article was, maybe it has not changed my thinking that radically. (Laughter)

Interviewer: (Laughter) Okay. So you’ve mentioned a couple of times discussing things you have read with your husband or with friends, not necessarily at the time of reading but…

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: So I just wondered if you could just talk a little bit more about that. So the question I guess, but you can just reflect on it whichever way you like, is: do you ever discuss the news you read with family and friends, and if so, how do these kinds of things typically play out?

Corina: So I do… So I think, like you say, my reading of the news, it tends to be on an evening, and I tend to be on my own on an evening, and it tends to be an individual activity. So normally if I’m discussing it with somebody, it is the following day or a couple of days later, or even longer. But I do discuss them- what was the question again?

Interviewer: When do you discuss news with friends or family?

Corina: Yes, and how does it play out? Often me and my husband end up discussing politics and it doesn’t end well for either of us. (Laughter) Or… Yes, it often ends in debate, shall we say, around topics…

Interviewer: So what role would the news play in that? So is this the case of you and your husband would both read exactly the same source, then you might have a debate about what side- different aspects of that?

Corina: Yes, we haven’t necessarily read the same sources. If anything, it’s normally he has probably read the BBC and the Guardian on it, whereas I’ve read Twitter on it and read different opinion- so I often think that Twitter is more about gathering opinions on the news rather than… You know, it’s more the commentary on it rather than the actual source of it, tends to be how I look at it.

My husband’s not on Twitter at all, he doesn’t engage with it. So often, when we’re discussing, I guess, politics or other news articles, we’d normally… Although, to be fair, he reads the news much more extensively than I do. We may have read one of the same articles, but I’ve probably got the commentary from Twitter (Laughter) on it, whereas he has probably got just the news source on it. And I guess it’s more our different opinions or our different takes on that news.

It’s more, I think, that news article, or whatever we’re discussing, provides that sort of source of discussion point, or that area, to talk around and I guess it’s our opinions on it that we end up discussing rather than, per se, the actual subject itself.

Interviewer: Yes. And what about then with friends or colleagues? Like is there a certain time of the day or week when everyone would discuss stuff that’s in the news? Or will some people bring up certain topics?

Corina: Yes, it’s a bit more ad hoc, I guess, with friends and colleagues, especially colleagues now because we’re so… We’re not in the office together every day as it would have been, you know, a couple of years ago. So it’s much more ad hoc and opportunistic, when you end up talking about, “Oh have you seen such and such going on?” And I guess with friends, it’s probably more weekends when you see them, and again it’s ad hoc as to whether you end up talking about the news rather than, you know, just other things going on, (Laughter) just life in general, rather than talking about the news.

I think a lot of the- well, I talked at the beginning about how I feel like a lot of the news subjects that I read are quite serious-type news things that often… People kind of have very different opinions on it, and you don’t necessarily want to get into that debate in friendly or work situations. So there would definitely be things that I just wouldn’t, you know, discuss- do you know what I mean? That I wouldn’t necessarily bring up to discuss just because I don’t necessarily want to enter into that debate in those environments.

Interviewer: And are these the things… I know we were talking a bit in the abstract, but that kind of notion you just brought up, would that be… You wouldn’t bring certain topics up because you know colleagues would have a different opinion to you? Or just that you wouldn’t know where they’d sit on it and you’re scared in case…

Corina: It’s more, I wouldn’t necessarily know where they sit on it. Yes, and I wouldn’t- (Laughter)

Interviewer: It’s not worth the risk of having an argument?

Corina: Yes, exactly, it’s not worth the risk of having an argument or having to quietly excuse yourself (Laughter) from the conversation in order to avoid it.

Interviewer: Yes. Or someone going completely down in your estimations. (Laughter)

Corina: Yes exactly, that’s it, you don’t want to- yes, someone’s got a reputation and you don’t want to tarnish it in your own mind. (Laughter)

Interviewer: Right, so, your most frequent source is actually Twitter, by a long way, and we did, kind of, break down which Twitter handles were your most common in terms of news. But there wasn’t any that really stood up. There were a few fours, a few twos. But, you know, so these, I guess, are the news sources you typically rely on now. Do you think the sources that you’ve relied on have changed over time? Or does this represent something that has always been the case?

Corina: Well, looking at that list of eight that you’ve got there, I couldn’t tell you who three of them were. So I would say it was very fluid who the sources were, particularly the individuals. You know, obviously we’ve got- like BBC Break in there and Chronicle Live are obviously, I guess, recognised news sources who are tweeting about articles. So they would reasonably consistently pop up in my feed as I’m scrolling through and I’d probably look at.

Whereas, you know, Rainmaker1973, I have got no idea who that is, or Richard Burgon or Mr Matthew Todd for that matter. So I couldn’t tell you who they were or what I’ve read that (Laughter) they’ve been fighting about.

So whether I regularly look at them or whether I’ve looked at them a couple of times on- you know, they’ve been tweeting about a particular subject which has interested me for a few days and therefore have popped up… Yes, it would be quite… Whether I continue reading them, I don’t know. But the fact that, like you say, it’s not like it’s the same people on Twitter that I’m constantly reading, it is quite a broad spectrum of stuff that I see.

Interviewer: And I guess just to follow up a bit on that, so Twitter as a source of news, you did kind of touch on before. Do you think you would use Twitter as a source of scrolling for news a lot, lot more than going to the apps, the news source apps, as it would reflect with these numbers?

Corina: Yes. So I find myself… Whenever I’ve got, you know, five minutes of downtime or whatever, I find myself being more likely to click on Twitter as an app than I do the BBC or the Guardian. And I think it’s the fact that, you know, even if I’ve just got two minutes, I can just flick through and just see what’s happening because it’s all short bits.

Whereas often I find myself now, with the BBC, I go on and I will flick through the headlines and not want to read (Laughter) anything in detail that- I won’t want to click on any of the articles, same with the Guardian sometimes, because at that point I’m not wanting to sit and read something. I’m literally just wanting to see what’s going on briefly because I’ve got five minutes in between doing something else, so I’ll just have a quick look on.

So as a result, I think I do see a lot of things on Twitter that- yes, it is accurate that that’s the reflection of where I’m seeing things.

Interviewer: I guess what I might have expected to see, I don’t know why, but that within the common Twitter things you read news on were the Twitter ones of BBC and Guardian, for example. But that’s a kind of separate thing, so I guess…

Corina: Yes, like I’m not even sure I follow the Guardian on Twitter, (Laughter) which is a bit silly, really, isn’t it, if you think that’s-

Interviewer: When you have that up on your phone next to the Twitter app.

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. So yes, we’ve just talked about the kind of- the way that you rely on Twitter as a source of news. So a couple of questions around that, so just… I know you have talked about this a bit in terms of commentary versus news, but how do you feel about the role of social media as this disseminator of news and information and has it got any impact on the way that you might trust the information you encounter?

Corina: I find it a bit concerning, looking at that, how much I do use it, because, you know, it’s not checked but you’ve got all sorts going on there. So I do think it’s a bit concerning that that’s where I seem to be getting most of my news from. And definitely, like I said before, I tend to think of Twitter as kind of being the commentary on what’s going on, so it definitely informs my opinions about what I think of something before…

So potentially I see something on Twitter and I see a few people’s opinions on certain articles and then I might then go onto the Guardian later that day and read, you know, (Laughter) the actual news source about it. But before I’ve read the details in the news source, I’ve kind of already got somebody else’s opinion in my ear, I guess, around what I’m going to- and that, you know, it does inform what I then think I think before I’ve actually read the detail, rather than reading the detail of a news article on a source, making my own opinion, and then looking at Twitter and seeing whether it matches, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: Yes. Yes, it does. Do you think that… Well is that how you would kind of characterise, I guess, then… You’d first encounter a news story or an issue on Twitter, and you would read some commentary about that?

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: And then later on, you might go and read a journalistic, “Here’s a full article,” but about the same issue? Is that the kind of pattern?

Corina: Yes, that’s what I would say the pattern is. Or alternatively, I might have heard something on the radio while I’ve been in the car that morning, for instance, and I’ve heard a couple of minutes on the news or whatever, and I’ve got that as my basis. And then I’ve gone on Twitter and read, you know, the commentary on it. And again, then I might later go and look on the app and actually read the full detail.

Interviewer: So… Well I’m not going to make assumptions. Right, okay, how important is it to you that news comes from a trusted source? And the main question there is how do you determine if a source is trustworthy?

Corina: So I would say it was very important to me that it comes from a trusted source, but (Laughter) as you can see with it all coming from Twitter and God knows who on there, (Laughter) I don’t necessarily live by that apparently. So again, I mean how do I therefore think it’s trustworthy, you know, the things that I do read? I think again it comes back to that reading across different platforms to make sure the majority of stuff that I’m reading on Twitter is actually reasonably reflective of what else is being reported.

Interviewer: Okay. So you’ve mentioned in there this idea that you’ve got a way of verifying if something is true. But I guess what I’m asking is, what might go through your head when you first see a news thing to determine if it’s trustworthy, before you get to the point when you go, “Actually it’s not, so I’ll verify?” What makes it a trustworthy source?

Corina: So I guess if it’s a recognisable source, so if it’s one of the mainstream media outlets. You know, if it’s their Twitter that instantly makes me think it’s reliable, or if they’re linking through to what I consider to be a reliable source. So they’re linking through to, you know, a newspaper article or a journalistic article, I guess a news source that I recognise. So I guess if they’re linking through to that or it’s from that source, that instantly would tell me that it was a, you know… Well, I would think of it as being reputable and a reliable source of information.

Interviewer: So you’ve talked about you consider the source, and for you the source is the URL, the link. Is that linking to a news site?

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: And one that you already are familiar with or trust?

Corina: Yes. Like a recognisable news site. Yes, one that’s familiar to me, because I guess there are a lot of other news sites that aren’t familiar to me, which I wouldn’t necessarily trust.

Interviewer: And are there some that are familiar to you that you wouldn’t trust?

Corina: Yes, something like GB News or (Laughter) something like that, I wouldn’t necessarily trust that. I can’t think of any other examples. I guess if they’re not recognisable to me, then I don’t tend to trust it.

Interviewer: Yes. Are there any other factors that you might consider before determining if something is trustworthy? So you mentioned the source. You’ve mentioned the platform. But I wonder if things like the subject matter or the person who shared it might also come into the equation.

Corina: Yes. I guess it depends how much the subject matter matters, (Laughter) and whether the person sharing it was, I guess, relevant… You know, was paid to have some affiliation or some reason why they would know something in that area. But I guess that, yes, would make them appear more trustworthy to me.

Interviewer: And these people that would appear trustworthy, could their familiarity come from anywhere? Like, you know, are you talking about somebody who is- they are a journalist, and, “I know which news agency they work for?”

Corina: Yes, or I know there are some people on Twitter who are academics and I know… I don’t necessarily know off the top of my head where they work, but they’ve got, within their bio, that they’re an economist at such and such university.

So that, to me, would be somebody who has obviously got some form of specialist or expert knowledge in that area and therefore would be a reasonable person- and again, with other people who work in different areas, you know, they work for a pharmaceutical company or a medical charity or something like that, if that’s what they’re talking about, that’s the subject matter they’re talking about, it’s relevant to their workplace or the area that they work in, then that again would contribute to me thinking that knew something about what they were saying.

Interviewer: Okay, so that might be part of this verification process you’re doing and you might actually look at someone’s profile if you’re not already familiar with them?

Corina: Yes, possibly, yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you ever stopped following or relying on a certain news source or website because you stopped trusting it for some reason?

Corina: No. No, I don’t think I’ve ever stopped.

Interviewer: So you’ve had a kind of constant set of sources-

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: … and haven’t moved away from any for any reason, okay. So do you think that your trust in news and online information has been affected by any recent, sort of, events or phenomenons [sic] such as the rise of fake news, disinformation campaigns, deepfakes, AI-generated content? Have any of these things affected your trust?

Corina: Not really. I’m kind of conscious of them. So I know, for instance, when I see images of potentially famous people, it wouldn’t necessarily occur to me that that potentially could be a deepfake, but I am aware that some people have the capability to create images to make people look like they’re in certain situations or whatever. However I think I probably trust things on face value. In terms of disinformation campaigns, no… I think I probably like to think I’m (Laughter) on the right side of the information or that my views aren’t so extreme that they would be subject to that.

So no, I guess I kind of have an awareness of that but I don’t think it has necessarily affected how much I trust what I see.

Interviewer: Okay. So similar trail of thought, do you think that the development of deepfakes, AI-generated content, etc., will affect people’s ability to verify online information in the future?

Corina: Yes, because I can’t see how it wouldn’t, because… Yes, I mean if people can generate misinformation- you know, if you can use AI to put a lot of wrong information on multiple different sources through using AI technology, then that idea of, you know- like I’ve said to you, the way I tend to think if something doesn’t seem right, I tend to look at a different source to kind of verify it, so actually if all those sources have been subject to the same AI techniques to create misinformation, then it would make it much more difficult to verify what’s true and what’s not.

I mean with the deepfake images and videos and stuff like that, I mean I’ve got no idea how a regular person can identify when they are (Laughter) deepfakes and when they’re not real.

Interviewer: Do you feel like right now, today, you could recognise fake video or fake audio from real?

Corina: Probably not, no.

Interviewer: Okay. So as extension of that, do you think you’ve possibly encountered video and audio on Twitter that [is not authentic 0:43:42]?

Corina: I don’t… (Laughter) You’re making me question it now.

Interviewer: (Laughter) I didn’t mean to [Crosstalk].

Corina: (Laughter) I was going to say no but now you’ve said it… I’ve got no idea. I’ve not come across anything where I’ve thought, “Oh, that’s a fake video,” or, “That’s a fake campaign,” and, you know, “That’s actually AI-generated,” or, “That account’s a complete AI account or is not a real person.” I’ve not thought that about anything that I’ve seen. That doesn’t mean I’ve not come across it.

Interviewer: Oh, I didn’t mean to try to- (Laughter)

Corina: No, no, no, you’ve got to question everything, haven’t you, now? (Laughter)

Interviewer: Okay. We’ll move onto a slightly different theme now that we’re (Laughter) feeling uncomfortable.

Corina: Yes, now I can trust nothing. (Laughter)

Interviewer: It’s going to get worse though.

Corina: Oh God. (Laughter)

Interviewer: How comfortable are you with the use of algorithms to personalise news feeds?

Corina: I sit on the fence because it’s quite nice when somebody curates the news feed for you and you see the stuff that you want to see and you don’t have to scroll through loads of stuff that you’re not interested in. However, I know that it then means you don’t get to see a broad spread of stuff and it does sway your opinion and, you know, that concept of an echo chamber where you’re hearing all the same things, and just reinforcing your opinion rather than seeing opinions from across the piste, I don’t think is good or healthy for you to know be exposed to other opinions or other views.

So I am conscious that- so for instance, on Twitter, you’ve got- what is it? The ‘following’ and ‘for you’. I think the ‘for you’ feed is the one where they generate most of the stuff for you. And then you’ve got the ‘following’ stuff, [so they’re 0:45:48] the people that you actually follow. And I probably spend the majority of time on the ‘for you’ stuff where it’s generated for me, and then I sometimes go on to the ‘following’ stuff and I’m like, “Oh this is a bit boring.” (Laughter) Like I probably need to follow some more people to make this a bit more interesting.

But that’s probably because the majority of people that I’m following are, sort of, the more verified sources, whereas on the ‘for you’ stuff, they’re giving me random people’s opinions, which is… I don’t know, is that more interesting to see? I guess it is (Laughter) to an extent. Maybe not more accurate or reflective or whatever but… Yes, so I know within myself that actually, I probably spend more time on the algorithm-generated stuff than I do on the stuff which I have chosen to follow. And that doesn’t necessarily sit right with me but I know that that’s where my preference sits, if that makes sense.

Interviewer: So there’s a couple of things in there, so obviously going back to you not recognising some of these Twitter handles, so it’s likely these are people that you don’t follow but you’ve encountered in the curated news feed.

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: So I just wanted to ask, before we stay on that, do you ever- so when I mentioned curated news feeds, you instantly thought of Twitter. Do you ever access news through other- like the Apple News or the Google News or the home pages of...

Corina: Not really. So sometimes I guess on my phone- is it Google News I get sometimes?

Interviewer: Do you have an Android phone?

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: Yes, it will just be…

Corina: Yes, Google News. But I rarely interact or look at that. And I think there’s Upday or something as well on my phone; I don’t really know what that is, but if I scroll or flick [away 0:47:46], that shows me news stuff, but again I don’t really interact or look at that.

Interviewer: Yes, that’s not like a source for you at all.

Corina: No.

Interviewer: Okay, so the Twitter thing, you prefer this algorithm of the curated list?

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you ever then follow accounts on there?

Corina: Yes. So sometimes if, I guess, someone’s saying something interesting or I think, “Oh you’d be a good person to follow,” or, “That’s a good account to follow,” then yes I do.

Interviewer: And then take them onto your other list that you don’t look at and then- (Laughter)

Corina: (Laughter) Yes, exactly. “I’ll never see you again, but (Laughter) I’ll give you a follow.”

Interviewer: Okay, right. So still on this idea of, kind of, algorithms and data, have you ever been concerned about the use of your personal data by the news websites, the apps?

Corina: No. Well, I’ve been concerned by it. I’m aware that they more than likely- well they obviously do collect it in order to be able to formulate the algorithms for me. Does it concern me? A little, when you don’t necessarily know what they are going to be doing with that. Plus, to an extent, I kind of think, “That’s my personal information, why should you be able to have it or profit from it?” Which I’m sure they do. You know, “That’s my information, that should be held by me rather than you, but you’re obviously collecting it,” so… Yes, they have it.

So I guess, yes, when I think about it, I don’t really like the idea of them collecting or using my personal information, but I’m obviously already aware that they do, and I’ve not taken any action in order to stop it or (Laughter) change my methods based upon it, so…

Interviewer: Okay. So just speaking of taking action, so probably not many people take actions, probably many people think, “It’s not great but it makes the thing convenient, that’s okay.”

Corina: Yes. Exactly, yes.

Interviewer: But on a kind of smaller scale enactment of that, I suppose, how often do you take the time to adjust the cookie settings on websites and things like that?

Corina: Oh, very rarely. If they’ve got the option to reject all cookies on the thing, I often click ‘reject all cookies’, but if it’s only ‘accept all cookies’ or ‘go to the settings’, I just accept them. Because I have, a couple of times, gone to the settings and it’s normally so difficult to under- like I don’t necessarily understand what I need to be clicking to turn off or what I want to turn off in order to do it. So yes, if there’s an option to reject cookies, I normally reject them, but if it’s an option to go into the settings and have to play with them in order to do it, then I don’t do it.

Interviewer: So you talked about, you know, the deal, the bargain, for having this personalised news feed is people can make profit from your data, third parties can make profit from your data. You expressed a kind of uneasiness with that. But I wonder, kind of, maybe including that or beside that, what do you think are the main impacts? And you did touch on this a little bit earlier, but just to give it a chance on its own, what do you think are the main impacts of personalised news feeds on the type of information people are going to be exposed to?

Corina: It’s that you just see more of what you’ve liked or read before, rather than seeing a broader, I guess, feed of different items. So it’s that fact that it kind of sends you down a funnel or a path to look at more of the same rather than exposing you to a broader level of, I guess, news, which then has that potential impact upon… It constantly reinforces the opinion that you might already have, rather than presenting different opinions to you which then may challenge or change or shape how you think.

Interviewer: And what do you think is the kind of impact of that?

Corina: I think, on a societal level, you end up with people who have got more polarised opinions, who are more sat on their fence and are less willing to engage with other people’s opinions, or more open to, I guess, change their minds or have a discussion around different areas. You know, it’s that people end up thinking that they are right because (Laughter) they’ve read so much of the same thing, but that’s not because there’s nothing written which says something different, but it’s because they’re just being exposed to the same thing all of the time.

Interviewer: Yes. (Laughter) We’ll try and have some happier discussion. How do you feel, right now, about the level of objectivity in online news reporting?

Corina: Well, everyone’s got their own objective, (Laughter) haven’t they? I don’t think it’s particularly great. So I’d say, you know, the BBC News was meant to be the object of news sources, not meant to be politically swayed; it’s meant to report the facts. But I’m not particularly convinced that it’s the most objective news source anymore. I think there are certain bits of news that they cover and certain bits that they don’t cover, and that’s obviously an editorial decision to not cover certain bits of news.

So I think… You know, in previous years, I’ve always thought of the BBC as that objective news source, and the fact that I no longer think that it’s as objective as it once was, I mean that kind of says it all really, doesn’t it? That I don’t think there is really an objective news source out there anymore. I think every news source- you know, Twitter, I mean that’s- (Laughter) [God knows what you’ve got on 0:55:26] Twitter, but even the Guardian or whatever, they’ve all got their angle that they’re coming from.

Interviewer: Do you trust the BBC as the state broadcaster more than privately owned, advertising-funded news sources?

Corina: Erm… Inherently, yes, but I do think they sometimes don’t report things that other broadcasters or news outlets do report, and then, you know, if they don’t say anything, then you are looking at the sources I guess. So I guess, yes, I do still trust the BBC but not, I guess, to the same extent that I used to.

Interviewer: And you might have to have another trusted source to cover the things that aren’t covered.

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you think that state broadcasters, the BBC, should be subject to different regulations or standards to the privately owned news outlets?

Corina: Are they not already? I mean I guess- oh as the fact that they’re meant to be objective and they’re not meant to be politically leaning and all the rest, is that just part of their internal expectations or is there- I don’t whether there’s reg- there’s probably not. I don’t know, is there regulation on that? I don’t know.

Interviewer: I think regulation-wise, it’s going to be now Ofcom. Standards, I suppose, are different than what we were talking about. I think there are standards that are set, which shift over time perhaps. But do you think- say we don’t know how things are now, do you think that state broadcasters should have different or do you think they should have the same as everyone else?

Corina: I think they should have the same as everybody else.

Interviewer: So you mentioned, sort of, the online world and you also mentioned political polarisation and stuff like that, and your own increasing distrust in the media. So what steps do you think media producers and broadcasters can take to maintain their credibility and trustworthiness?

Corina: Oh, that’s a good question. Erm… How can they maintain their… I guess they very much, like, verify their sources, don’t they? And by maintaining that sort of verification, that’s probably quite important in order to maintain that trustworthiness of them, that they won’t just print anything. Sometimes the news apps can be a bit slower to react to things than the Twitterati and I think that’s because they’re verifying, actually, the information before they publish it. You know, when there’s breaking news or whatever, they might put a headline up or whatever rather than any details.

As I say, I think the other thing about them is, it’s maintaining the different channels, isn’t it? So obviously with the BBC, you’ve got the online presence but you’ve also got the TV and the radio as well, and with the Guardian, you’ve got the written- the actual newspaper as well, haven’t you?

Interviewer: Just about.

Corina: Yes, just about. I don’t think I can tell you when I last bought a newspaper. So having actually those additional sources, you know, that’s where they publish rather than it just being online. I don’t know, I’m just kind of thinking out loud as to whether that makes them appear more trustworthy in that they’re not just focussed on a single channel of communication, that they’ve got outputs in other places.

Interviewer: I mean yes, these are difficult things to talk about, and part of the whole point of this study and getting you to do the dairy first was maybe to get some ideas percolating. Because if you ask people these things, nobody knows, nobody thinks about it. So I understand these aren’t easy things.

But I guess, just to follow up on what you were saying, do you think it’s important that the news producers are transparent about their sources and their methods of reporting?

Corina: Yes.

Interviewer: That seems to be one thing you’re kind of-

Corina: Yes, definitely. Yes, where their sources are coming from, it always gives [ \_\_\_ 1:01:39] gravitas, doesn’t it, to a story? Or, you know, it’s a source that doesn’t want to be identified or whatever, it’s always a bit more, well… (Laughter) A bit like, yes, “Really?” Like why don’t they want to be- well I guess sometimes you know why they don’t want to be identified, but it feels a bit more hearsay, doesn’t it? Rather than definite reporting on something which has definitely happened.

Interviewer: Yes, a Number 10 spokesperson.

Corina: Yes, exactly. Yes, an unidentified spokesperson.

Interviewer: And then would you say that that kind of stuff does affect your level of trust as well?

Corina: Yes, I guess it feeds into it, doesn’t it?

Interviewer: Yes. Well that is the end of my questions I’ve got written down. I just wondered that, you know, the… On page 6, you’ve got the ‘familiarity and trust’. So I guess there’s a kind of correlation between things that are trusted and familiar, which reflects exactly what you were speaking about, but there is a lot of stuff that is unfamiliar but you trusted it quite highly. And I wondered could you imagine what sorts of things they might have been, or can you remember?

Corina: I think there are probably comments on Twitter which I agreed with, rather than… So I’m saying, “Yes I trust that because it marries up with my opinions that I’ve got, but I’ve got no idea who you are, (Laughter) or what you’re saying. I’m just agreeing with you and…” So yes, I guess I’m saying that, “I trust what you’re saying it because it fits what I’ve…”

Interviewer: Sounds about right.

Corina: Yes, “It fits with what I think so…”

Interviewer: And then, there are some- well there’s one in particular, which looks like you were very, very familiar and have very little trust. Can you think what that might have been? Or is there anything you can think of that fits that bill?

Corina: It will be something that I disagreed with. (Laughter) Something somebody said which I thought, “I don’t agree with that.” But it’s obviously from… I couldn’t think where it was from, but it was obviously from a source that I recognise that I didn’t necessarily agree with what they were saying, but I couldn’t tell you what it was.

Interviewer: Okay. Well I think that’s it from me. So we’ve got a little bit of time, so I just thought do you have- is there anything else about the study, thoughts you had either about the stuff we’ve been talking about or about the study in general, or about this information I’ve given you? Are there any other things you think that we haven’t picked up on?

Corina: No. I mean I was going to ask you a little bit more generally about the study and where it’s going, and what you’re using the information for.

Interviewer: Right, well, I can do that, but I will stop recording first.

Corina: Okay.

END AUDIO

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