**Notes from initial visit (19th December 2013) and Favourite Thing/Family Interviews (8th February 2014) with Megan (10).**

**Object from the present:** An Android tablet (currently broken)

**Object from the past:** A photo of her dressed-up for a Baton competition.

**First visit (19th Dec 2013):**

Prior to the favourite thing and family interviews, I visited Megan and her mother (with Sara Bragg) on 19th December 2013. We initially approached Megan’s Head Teacher who recommended her for the study. We learnt that Megan was one of a triplet, and was the only girl. Megan lives in quite a remote village and this has presented some challenges for getting to her. To get to Megan’s village it is necessary to catch a train and then a taxi at the other end. Trains run just once an hour from a well-known city junction station, and this is the only train service to and from the village. Sara and I found that it was necessary to book a taxi both to and from the local train station in advance, as taxi services are few and far between. I have used the same driver on both visits now, and he runs the taxi firm with just himself as the driver. I mention this as it illustrates again how small and remote Megan’s village is! After our initial visit, I arranged to visit Megan in mid-January to carry out the first set of interviews. Unfortunately the train from the city junction was cancelled, meaning that the next service would not run for another hour. As such the interview had to be re-scheduled to February as Megan had girl guides that evening and there wouldn’t have been time to carry out the interviews.

On the first visit, Sara and I met with Megan and her mother Lindsey. One of the first impressions you get of the house is how big it looks – a large old rustic country house. We go into the sitting room where a log fire is burning in a stove and they have a large Christmas tree in the corner. The smell of pine hits you as you enter the room. A small white scotty dog is very welcoming of new visitors and scampers about, nudging people for affectionate scratches. Sara and I have found out that we might have problems booking a taxi back to the station as most services will be pre-booked for school runs and airport transfers. Sara says she will try and find an available service by ringing around, but Lindsey offers to drive us to the station.

The meeting lasts for a little over an hour and was quite a general chat about Megan’s everyday life and about the research. We learn that Megan goes to a small rural primary school, and is due to go to a secondary school at the end of this year. Due to the size of the school there are three-year groups in each class, and so Megan’s classroom and teacher are shared with year’s four and five. This also means that she always shares the same table as her brothers. Megan has an extremely busy after-school schedule, taking part in different in-school and out-of-school activities on different days of the week (including piano playing, swimming and football). She describes her favourite as Baton Twirling, which she has previously entered competitions for. These competitions often involve her going away for weekends with her mum, which Lindsey described as providing them with a bit of bonding time together. During this first chat we also learnt that Megan has recently been given a tablet (as have her brothers). She describes how she uses the tablet before school and that it is mainly used for playing games, and is not used for chatting with friends. During the favourite thing interview this appears to have changed, as she shows me a chat app that she uses to talk with friends from school. Megan describes Minecraft as one of her favourite games, as well as a game called Bakery Story.

I ask in this first meeting if Megan knows what items she will choose for the favourite thing interview. She thinks she will choose an old bear from when she was younger as a thing from the past, and her tablet as her current favourite thing. I ask if she thinks she could live without the tablet and she says she thinks she could as it has previously been confiscated and so she has had to live without it already. Lindsey describes some of her anxieties about technology and media in the home. She describes how she regularly checks what they’re doing on different screens. However, on one occasion this led to her accidently finding out about a PowerPoint presentation that the children had been preparing for her as a Mother’s Day present. Lindsey also describes how she feels its unfortunate that they can’t go outdoors much due to them living on a road with no pedestrian access (it’s a road with two large hedgerows on either side). This also means that it is necessary for them to have to drive everywhere.

We talk for a while about Megan’s enjoyment of sports and physical activities. Lindsay relays how Megan campaigned at school for a weekly girls’ only day on the football pitch, which she achieved. They both agree that Megan is quite competitive. They also describe going swimming together and how this is their main shared activity. Megan also describes spending a bit of time with her brothers, such as watching the Disney series Liv and Maddie and the Simpsons, as well as playing Minecraft. However, her life seems to generally be quite separate from her brothers and she has her own room whilst they both share.

We learn in this visit that Megan has an older brother who is eighteen and studies media production at a college in Brighton. We also learn that the family have a lodger, who may join us for the family interview.

**Favourite Things & Family Interviews (8th Feb 2014):**

My second visit is on a Saturday afternoon at 2pm. I leave a bit earlier as I want to make sure that there are no travel problems. I spend a little time walking around the train station’s village (Megan lives in a smaller neighbouring village), which has lots of cars passing through but I don’t pass any other pedestrians. All of the houses are very big, and are either quite old or in a faux-old style.

When I arrive at Megan’s house her parents meet me at the door. I haven’t spoken to or met her dad, Aaron, up till now and so we have some quick introductions. All three of the triplets are milling about, as is the family dog. Lindsay tells me that the older brother is unable to make it as his girlfriend as a university interview and he has gone with her. Aaron tells me he was hoping to be here but apparently mixed up the dates. I’m also told that he wanted to talk about his media production course, and possibly helping Megan with her day in the life study by filming parts of it with her. We settle down in the living (which is apparently the only heated room in the house) and I go through the consent forms with Megan and Lindsay. Aaron comes in to set the Skybox to record something and one of the Megan’s brothers hangs around until Lindsay shoos him away. Megan fetches her favourite things and we start by discussing her tablet (her current favourite thing). Apparently it is broken at the moment and Megan has trouble typing on the screen’s keyboard. She’s waiting for her dad to get an SD card to transfer her data and apps off the tablet ready to go onto a replacement tablet. As her favourite thing from the past she has chosen a picture of herself and her friend, dressed in their competition outfits for baton twirling. Apparently the photo was taken about a year ago (Megan appears to get a little confused as to how long ago exactly). I’m surprised by her choice of past object and try to clarify with her why she considers it to be something from her past. She seems to suggest that it is because the photo is of a past event and she later talks through some of the memories associated with that particular competition (which was one of her first), such as being nervous and crying. Megan seems a little nervous at first, but is generally quite confident throughout the interview.

After talking about her objects for just over half an hour, we go up to her room to take some pictures and talk about some other her other favourite objects. She tells me during the interview that she is quite into One Direction now, and has recently received lots of posters from her uncle, which she has put up all over her room. Apparently she used to have Moshi Monster posters up and putting up boy band posters seems like a significant transition for her. During the interview she seems quite embarrassed whenever we talk about One Direction. She describes how she goes up to her room to listen to music sometimes, which she didn’t used to do. As there is no heating in her room she generally prefers to be downstairs.

After showing me around her room, we return downstairs for the family interview. The family interview consists of Megan and her parents, and her two brothers. The boys are quite excited as I’ve brought cookies, and Lindsay asks them to fetch dishes to eat them over. After about fifteen minutes the three children become restless and start to crawl over the furniture and their parents. The children also make lots of jokes throughout the interview, often laughing out loud and shouting out. At one point they are teasing their dad about swearing and say that he owns something with a swear word on. One of the brothers goes to fetch a tube of adhesive, which Aaron uses for work as a builder. On the side the tube says ‘Sticks Like Sh\*t’, much to the kids’ amusement. Aaron tries to convince them that it says ‘shot’, which they aren’t convinced by.

We talk about the eldest brother having a mobile phone to keep in touch with his parents and when this discussion shifts to the younger ones Lindsay becomes visibly less comfortable. All three kids immediately latch onto the discussion and use it as an opportunity to petition their parents for mobile phones once they are in secondary school. Clearly this is not the first conversation about them having mobile phones, and it is one that Lindsay clearly doesn’t enjoy returning to. Responding to this shift in mood, I find myself extending an olive branch to the parents by adding that I lived without a mobile phone until sixth form. I’m not sure if this intervention was necessary but I get the sense that both parents welcomed it.

I have a ten-minute wait after the interview before my taxi is due to pick me up. I talk to Aaron about his work briefly and he describes how he recently installed a cinema in Philip Schofield’s home. Shortly after this my taxi pulls up.