

Me, Myself and Blog-I

An analysis of how young teenagers construct a self-identity in the blog format.

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Index

1.0 Introduction.....5

 1.1 Theme5

 1.2 Other Research6

 1.3 Research Question7

 1.4 Research Design8

 1.5 Definitions.....8

 1.6 Disposition of the Thesis9

2.0 Modernity and Self-Identity9

 2.1 The Reflexivity of Modernity9

 2.2 The Reflexive Project of the Self10

 2.2.1 Narrative of the Self.....12

 2.2.2 Trajectory of the Self15

 2.2.3 Internal Referentiality.....15

 2.3 Giddens Theory in Relation to Blogs16

 2.4 Summary.....17

3.0 The Mediazation of Society and Digital Storytelling17

 3.1 The Mediazation of Society17

 3.2 A New Way of Communicating.....19

 3.3 Digital Storytelling22

 3.4 Summary.....23

4.0 Method.....24

4.1 Choice of Method.....	24
4.2 Sampling	24
4.3 How the Analysis Has Been Carried Out	26
4.4 Validity and Reliability	27
4.5 Ethical Reflections	27
5.0 Analysis.....	27
5.1 Presentation of the Blogs	28
5.2 Digital Storytelling.....	30
5.3 Mediated Communication.....	38
5.4 The Reflexive Project of the Self	45
5.4.1 Narrative of the Self.....	45
5.4.2 Trajectory of the Self	61
5.4.3 Fateful Moments and Existential Questions	64
5.4.4 Internal Referentiality.....	67
6.0 Discussion.....	70
6.1 How Do the Blogs Relate to Couldry’s Theory about Digital storytelling?.....	70
6.2 How Are The Blogs Affected by the Fact That They Are Mediated Communication?....	72
6.3 How Do Constructing a Blog Identity Relate to Giddens’ Theory About Self-Identity and the Reflexive Project of the Self?.....	74
6.4 Concluding Thoughts - How Do Young Teenagers Construct a Self-Identity in the Blog Format?	77
7.0 Literature.....	79

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Theme

"What is it, at bottom, this being oneself?" (Ibsen 1892:260) asks Peer in Ibsen's play "Peer Gynt". He is not the only one who has asked this question, nor is he the only one who has tried to answer it. Anthony Giddens is one of those who has tried to answer the question. He states: "We are not who we are, but what we make of ourselves." (Giddens 1991:75). We live in a time where we constantly face choices, choices concerning both the simplest and most difficult aspects of life. We are repeatedly forced to choose between the endless options available. This never ending choice-making is part of what Giddens calls the reflexive project of the self, a project concerning how we construct our self-identities. We are free to create whatever image we want of ourselves. The project can be seen as a process which never ends.

With the mediatization of society we are what we make of ourselves, not only among those we interact with in face-to-face encounters, we have the possibility of "making ourselves" in several new arenas using mediated communication. Blogs are one of these arenas where we can portray an image of ourselves. The phenomenon of blogging is getting larger by the day. Today there are an endless number of weblogs, or blogs, on the internet. Google has even created a search engine for blogs alone to make it easier to manoeuvre through the world of blogging. But how do you "make yourself" in this new arena? Can you construct a self-identity on a blog? Not all blogs serve the purpose of portraying an image of the author. Some blogs revolve around specific interests such as fashion, film, food, politics, religion and so forth. In this thesis, however, I have examined the blogs of teenagers between the ages of 14 to 16, which they use as personal diaries online. More precisely, this study investigates how young bloggers construct a self-identity in the blog format. The title of the thesis "Me, Myself and Blog-I" reveals that there might be a difference between the real identity and the identity found on the blog, which I have called the 'blog-I'.

The theory of identity which the thesis rest upon is Anthony Giddens' theory of self-identity in modernity. I shall also introduce Stig Hjarvard's theory of mediazation and Nick Couldry's theory of digital storytelling.

1.2 Other Research

There already exist several master theses about blogs in various contexts, but not that many focuses on blogs and identity. Yet, there are some which do exactly this.

Tonje Brustuen's thesis *STORIED SELVES IN AMERICAN EXPATRIATE WEBLOGS* considers self-presentations - and how the experience of living abroad is narrated in weblogs. This thesis has a very specific focus, examining expatriates' blogs. Because of this specific focus her findings are not that relevant for my thesis, but it is still relevant when it comes to blogging and identity. Synnøve Eide's thesis *Maskeradeball eller maskefall? (Masquerade or lose of mask?)*¹ has a historical view of identity and uses this as her framework when analyzing. First, she focuses on how identity is presented in blogs and Facebook, and then she looks at the difference between the two arenas. Karoline Tømte has written a thesis called *Bloggpraksis som lært selvrepresentasjon (Blogging as learnt self-representation)*² about how self-representation is being handled in blogs. Her findings show that blogging is subject to certain rules and conditions, and that these in turn will influence the represented self. In many ways Tømte asks the same question as I do in my thesis. However, she has not done an analysis of the blogs. She has interviewed the bloggers because her focus is on the authors' attitude towards blogging. Mari H Flaaten has done both an analysis of blogs as well as

¹ My translation of the thesis title

² My translation of the thesis title

interviews with the bloggers in her thesis *Bloggens komplekse natur (The complex nature of blogs³)*. The objective of the thesis was to aid understanding of what a weblog is and its purpose in terms of shaping personal identity and building social networks on the Internet. Although she has done an analysis of the blogs, this has been done in relation to the social networks online. In other words, the analysis does not focus on the content of the blogs, as my analysis does.

There also exist a few articles which consider empirical work which has been done on blogging. Vincent W. Hervern, author of the article Threaded Identity in cyberspace: Weblogs & Positioning in the Dialogical Self, focuses on the dialogical self found in blogs. The article "Gender, Identity and Language Use in Teenage Blogs" by David A. Huffaker and Sandra L. Calvert, focuses, as the name of the article implies, on gender, identity and language use. More precisely it focuses on sexual identity. Lastly, Rory Ewins has written an article which focuses on blogs and academic identity called "Who are You? Weblogs and Academic Identity".

1.3 Research Question

Because authors of blogs tell stories about themselves, what they do, what they like and so on, the readers start to get a picture of a person's identity when reading a blog. My thesis question is therefore: **"How do young teenagers construct a self-identity in the blog format?"** To help answer the thesis question I have used the following research questions:

"How does the construction of a blog-identity relate to Giddens' theory about self-identity?"

"How are the blogs affected by the fact that they are mediated communication?"

³ My translation of the thesis title

“How do the blogs in question relate to Couldry’s theory of digital storytelling?”

It is important to keep in mind when reading this thesis that I am not analyzing the bloggers identity. It is only the identity construction – the “blog-I” I am analyzing. It would have been interesting to do interviews with the bloggers as well, to see if the constructed identity on the blog (blog-I) correspond with the “real” self-identity. However, because of the limitation of space this was not possible.

1.4 Research Design

To answer the research questions four blogs written by teenagers between the ages of 14 to 16 will be analyzed by the method of qualitative content analysis. Before the analysis is carried out, theory concerning central concepts of the thesis questions will be examined. These include theory of self-identity, digital storytelling and the mediazation of society.

1.5 Definitions

Considering the notion of self-identity being such an important part of this thesis, there is a need to define the concept. In this thesis self-identity should be understood as: “the self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography”. (Giddens 1991:244).

Naturally, weblogs are also an important concept in this thesis. I have used the following definition of weblogs: “At its simplest, a Weblog is an online page containing a collection of links and associated textual commentaries or annotations, presented in reverse chronological order, to which new entries (links and text) are added on a frequent basis.” (Hervern 2004:322) I will hereafter refer to weblogs simply as blogs. A person who writes a blog is called a blogger. The act of writing a blog is called blogging.

1.6 Disposition of the Thesis

The thesis has the following construction: In chapter two central concepts about self-identity will be elaborated. In chapter three the concept of digital storytelling and mediatization and its effect on communication will be explored, after which I elaborate on the method I will be using for my analysis in chapter four. Following this, the analysis will be carried out in chapter five, before the discussion of how the findings correspond with the theory and my concluding thoughts will be presented in chapter six.

2.0 Modernity and Self-Identity

In this chapter central theoretical concepts from the sociologist Anthony Giddens book *Modernity and Self-Identity* will be elaborated. The main part of this chapter will focus on the conceptions relating to self-identity because these are of most importance to my thesis question. However, some of the concepts relating to modernity will also be elaborated because they interrelate with the main concepts of self-identity.

We live in a world where we are constantly forced to make choices whether we want to or not. As Giddens puts it: “We have no choice but to choose”. (Giddens 1991:81). High Modernity, which is what Giddens has named the current time, could easily be called the time of choice. We have to choose our occupation, where to live, who we want to marry, our lifestyle and what we want to wear, just to mention some of the choices we have to make. We have a great deal of freedom when it comes to selecting an alternative, but this freedom can be overwhelming considering the amount of options to choose from. Although the alternatives are many there is no one telling you what you should choose. It becomes a project to design who you want to be through the constant choice making. The project is a process which never ends. (Giddens 1991).

2.1 The Reflexivity of Modernity

The never ending process of designing who to be Giddens has named ‘The Reflexive Project of the Self’. Before this concept can be explained, however, we need to examine the

conception of 'Reflexivity of Modernity', and the concept of 'Reflexivity' itself. The concept of reflexivity is one of Giddens' central concepts. He uses it both when examining the self and high modernity. Furthermore, reflexivity in many ways defines high modernity. In fact, the whole notion of being able to choose is connected with reflexivity. Reflexivity is understood to mean the concept of being able to evaluate the consequences of a choice and use this knowledge when choosing. Therefore, when Giddens speaks of The Reflexivity of Modernity he is referring to the way the effect of choices are constantly evaluated in high modernity. Both the knowledge of the consequence of our different choices and knowledge in general is a vital part of decision-making. In other words, reflexivity is the concept of being aware of the effect of a choice and choose on the basis of this knowledge. This means that if you gain new knowledge you may have to, or want to, re-evaluate your choices. You need to be able to defend your choices in relation to the knowledge available about the effect of the choices. If you cannot defend them they are not valid. This makes the concept of reflexivity dynamic. New knowledge often equals new choices. Because of this, very few choices in life are definite. Even knowledge itself is dynamic. There is a constant drive to explore new knowledge and very often the exploration of new knowledge makes old knowledge no longer valid. The notion of the dynamic of knowledge is at the core of The Reflexivity of Modernity. Giddens sums it up in the following sentence: "The reflexivity of modernity operates, not in a situation of greater and greater certainty, but in one of methodological doubt. Even the most reliable authorities can be trusted only 'until further notice'." (Giddens 1991:84). The notion of reflexivity of modernity also affects the self. As Giddens puts it: "The reflexivity of modernity extends into the core of the self. Put in another way, in the context of a post-traditional order, the self becomes a reflexive project." (Giddens 1991:32). Hence, the reflexive project of the self is a consequence of the reflexivity of modernity.

2.2 The Reflexive Project of the Self

As mentioned earlier, 'The Reflexive Project of the Self' is the constant process of designing who to be. Or in Giddens words: "We are not who we are, but what we make of ourselves."

(Giddens 1991:75) The way humans design themselves is by choosing between different options in life. The reflexivity of this process means that the choices are evaluated on the basis of the effect of the choice and the way this choice affects who you are. A choice is not only a decision about how to act, but about who to be. This means, that when a person is to choose between for example the many options of education, the person needs to know how the choice of education will affect which occupation he can choose later on and whether or not he is satisfied with the options of occupation available which the chosen education gives him. If the person does not like the outcome of choosing a specific education he needs to re-evaluate the choice of education on the basis of this knowledge. The reflexive project of the self can be summed up in the following question: "In which way do my choices effect who I am?". Giddens calls this a self-interrogation. "At each moment, or at least at regular intervals, the individual is asked to conduct a self-interrogation in terms of what is happening" (Giddens 1991:76). The reflexive project of the self entails creating self-awareness. In other words, asking: "Who am I?". When asking who we are, there is always a chance that we do not like the answer. If this is so, we might want to rebuild who we are. The only way we can change who we are is by altering past choices. (Giddens 1991).

The reflexive project of the self is typical for high modernity and stands in contrast to how choices were made in traditional time, or rather, how choices were not made. In traditional time you were more or less born into a specific role which was decided based on external criteria such as gender, religion, tradition, class and family. The lack of external criteria is the origin of the reflexive project of the self. There is no one telling us who to be. We have an enormous freedom when it comes to designing ourselves. We have no external anchoring which means we have to create an internal anchoring. Giddens calls this 'Internal Referentiality', which will we elaborated below. It is your own rules and criteria which help you choose who to be. To be able to create internal anchoring you have to create a coherent self. (Giddens 1991).

2.2.1 Narrative of the Self

The Narrative of the self is a way of understanding who we are in terms of the different stories of our life. "It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self" (Giddens 1991:54). The narrative of the self is a way of organizing our lives. Or as Charles Taylor puts it: "In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going" (Taylor 1989 in Giddens 1991:54). It is at the core of self-identity. When Giddens defines Self-Identity the biography of the individual is part of the definition: "The self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography." (Giddens 1991:53) This means that the reflexive project of the self is organized through the narrative of the self. When looking at our biography we can determine whether or not the choices we have made have had the impact on our lives which we were hoping for. However, the narrative of the self is not only about evaluating the past, it is also a way of planning the future. An important part of keeping the narrative of the self going forward is the 'Ideal self'. The ideal self is defined by Giddens as: "The ideal self is the 'self as I want to be'" (Giddens 1991:68). The ideal self is the drive which keeps you going, a person's hopes and dreams. Considering the amount of stories a person's biography will contain after a while, one might think that incorporating all of these into one story might be difficult and perhaps even create a narrative of the self which might seem illogical. According to Giddens this is not the case. He says: "A person may make use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self-identity which positively incorporates elements from different setting into an integrated narrative." (Giddens 1991:190). In other words, although a person might have stories highlighting different aspects of his or her personality, there is still something which remains constant through all of these stories. It is what distinguishes and characterizes that person.

To have pride in the self is also connected with a person's biography. "A person who successfully fosters a sense of pride in the self is one who is able psychologically to feel that his biography is justified and unitary." (Giddens 1991:66). In other words, to be able to keep a coherent and justified narrative is of great importance in order to build a confident self

because it is through the narrative we evaluate ourselves. The narrative of the self can be made explicit by for example keeping a journal. This might make the narrative more organized and clear.

2.2.1.1 Lifestyle

An important aspect of the narrative of the self is 'lifestyle'. Although there are many types of lifestyles to choose from, it is not an option not to choose one. Thus, we are forced to choose a lifestyle. Giddens defines the term lifestyle in the following way: "... a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian need, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity". (Giddens 1991:81). In other words, the choice of lifestyle is closely bound together with the narrative of the self. Your choice of lifestyle tells the world around you who you are, it is the image you display, it is the choice of who to be. The set of practices within a lifestyle concerns what kind of clothes you wear, what you eat, how you act, how and with whom you spend your time, and so forth. However, these choices, as all other choices, are open to change considering that they are part of the reflexive project of the self where all choices might be revised. Different types of lifestyles are connected with different types of milieus. Therefore, when you choose a specific lifestyle you also choose what kind of milieu you want to be part of. Because of this, choosing a lifestyle often means choosing one milieu at the expense of another. (Giddens 1991).

Appearance is a vital part of the lifestyle and concerns the aspect of the body in a broad sense. A person's appearance gives clues to interpret their action. Because it is such an important ingredient of displaying who you are, it becomes a central part of the reflexive project of the self. Thus, the aspect of the body is not a simple notion. Giddens says: "In conditions of high modernity, the body is actually far less 'docile' than ever before in relation to the self, since the two become intimately coordinated within the reflexive project of self-identity." (Giddens 1991:218). Two central concepts Giddens discuss when talking about the body are the concept of dress and demeanour. The feeling of having a constant demeanour which one maintains no matter the surrounding, is of great importance in relation to the

feeling of having a coherent self. This does not mean that a person cannot adapt accordingly to the expected behaviour of a milieu. Indeed, it is something we all do. However, usually a person does not behave as an entirely different person when moving from one milieu to another. “The maintaining of constants of demeanour across varying settings of interaction is one of the prime means whereby coherence of self-identity is ordinarily preserved.” (Giddens 1991:100) In other words, the feeling that even though we adapt to different milieus, a part of us is the same no matter what, gives us the feeling of having a coherent self.

When it comes to choosing what kind of clothes to wear the options are never-ending. However, since the way a person dresses is so closely tied together to a person’s lifestyle the options are narrowed down. The way a person dresses, send out a signal of how that person wants to be perceived. An example of this, are the different codex of different occupations. Also, we dress differently for different occasions. “In all cultures, dress is vastly more than simply a means of bodily protection: it is, manifestly, a means of symbolic display, a way of giving external form to narratives of self-identity.” (Giddens 1991:62) In other words, the choice of clothing is an important part of the reflexive project of the self.

2.2.1.2 Fateful Moments

When it comes to the different stories of a person’s biography, some of the stories are of more importance than other. These stories are often related to ‘Fateful moments’. “Fateful moments are times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were at a crossroad in his existence; or where a person learns of information with fateful consequences.” (Giddens 1991:113). Such crossroads can for example be quitting a job, moving to another place, deciding to have a baby, getting married or getting a divorce. The result of choosing at a fateful moment might change a person’s way of living, and therefore might also alter his lifestyle. Information with fateful consequences could for example be getting told you have a fateful decease. A Fateful moment could also be when an accident occurs. At fateful moments the narrative of the self often takes a new turn.

2.2.2 Trajectory of the Self

'The trajectory of the self' can be defined as the course or path of life. It is closely bound together with the narrative of the self. The narrative of the self forms the trajectory and at the same time the trajectory moves the narrative of the self forward in terms of planning future actions. In other words, the trajectory of the self is both the path which you have left behind and your future path. In terms of the future, the trajectory is formed by the means of life plans. "Life plans are the substantial content of the reflexively organised trajectory of the self. Life-planning is a means of preparing a course of future actions mobilised in terms of the self's biography". (Giddens 1991:85). However, the anticipated lifespan is not necessarily the same as the actual lifespan. One can never know when fateful moments occur, for example. Yet, we plan for the time we anticipate to live. The trajectory helps us organise our life both in terms of the past and the future. It works as a personal calendar. "Personal calendars are timing devices for significant events within the life of the individual, inserting such events within a personalised chronology". (Giddens 1991:85). We often use a personal calendar when talking about our life by connecting different events together. An example might be: "When I was in high school I dated someone from China".

2.2.3 Internal Referentiality

As mentioned earlier, the lack of external criteria, such as tradition, telling us what to choose creates a need for something else which can help us when choosing between the never-ending options that modernity offer us. External criteria used to give us a framework from which to choose within. In high modernity, however, there is no framework unless we create one. This self-made framework is what Giddens call 'internal referentiality'. The different choices we make need to have some sort of connection to each other. They cannot be random choices, having no relation to the other choices we make. Internal referentiality is the framework of the reflexive project of the self. It is within this framework we choose. Internal referentiality Giddens define as "the creation of a personal belief system by means of which the individual acknowledges that 'his first loyalty is to himself'. The key reference

points are set 'from the inside' in terms of how the individual constructs/reconstructs his life history." (Giddens 1991:80).

2.3 Giddens Theory in Relation to Blogs

I believe that several of the elements of the reflexive project of the self can relate to the constructing of a blog-identity. The main aspect of the reflexive project of the self is the notion of choosing. When reading a blog the choices the blogger has already made become evident. We might also get to be a part of the process when they are to make a choice. Moreover, what they choose to post on the blog is also an important part of the blog-I. Considering the bloggers age I believe one is likely to see that when they learn something new, they might want to re-evaluate their choices, as new knowledge often leads to new choices. A blog also gives the author a chance to do a self interrogation as they can read their own blog and get an impression of the image they display to the readers. Do they like how they come off or not?

Most likely, the narrative of the self will be seen on the blog, as the blog usually serves as a narrative of the self for the blogger. The blog is, in fact, a platform where the bloggers integrate events from their lives into an ongoing story which the readers follow. I also believe the ideal self will be evident. It is likely to think that the bloggers will say something about their anticipations for the future, both in regard of who they want to be as a person and what their future life should look like. What might be the easiest to detect on a blog is a blogger's lifestyle. What kind of clothes they wear, what they eat, what they do, who they spend their time with and so forth is typical blog-material.

The trajectory of the self is also likely to appear on the blog. Still, even when reading a blog for a short time period the blogger might refer to past events and also planned events. The future events are formed by the bloggers life plans. In this regard the trajectory works as personal calendar for the author of the blog. We might even get to see the blogger experiencing fateful moments. However, there is a great variety as to how much a blog reveals of moments of very personal character.

Whether or not the readers are able to see a connection between the choices the blogger does is interesting. Is it possible to discover the internal referentiality? This will probably vary from blog to blog.

2.4 Summary

In this chapter central concepts relating to the self from Giddens book *Modernity and Self-Identity* have been elaborated. The different concepts interrelate and the relation between them can be summed up in the following sentences: Internal referentiality is the framework of the reflexive project of the self. The reflexive project of the self becomes coherent by means of the narrative of the self. Lifestyle gives the narrative of the self material form. The trajectory of the self emerges within the narrative of the self and at the same time it is a means of planning the future. How Giddens theory of the reflexive project of the self can relate to the constructing of a blog-identity has also been carried out.

3.0 The Mediazation of Society and Digital Storytelling

When analysing blogs, we need to know how it became both possible and natural to have a diary online. This chapter will focus on how the media has influenced society and especially the way media has influenced the way that we communicate today.

3.1 The Mediazation of Society

The phenomena of weblogs are part of the bigger phenomena of the mediazation of society. Stig Hjarvard's article *The Mediatization of Society* tries to answer the question of how media affects society and culture. Weblogs are a consequence of this affect. Hjarvard defines the term Mediatization in the following way:

By the mediazation of society we understand the process whereby society to an increasing degree is submitted to or becomes dependent on, the media and their logic. This process is characterized by a duality in that the media have become integrated into the operations of

other social institutions, while they also have acquired the status of social institutions in their own right. As a consequence, social interaction – within the respective institutions, between institutions, and in society at large – take place via the media. (Hjarvard 2008:113)

Giddens agrees with Hjarvard and claims that: “Modernity is inseparable from its ‘own’ media: the printed text and, subsequently, the electronic signal.” (Giddens 1991:24). In other words, the Mediazation of society affects both the way individuals interact with each other as well as affecting how different institutions communicate with each other and society. Communication in general takes place to a larger and larger extent via media. To what extent and in what way the media intervene in social interaction depends on the use of the different types of media. (Hjarvard: 2008:120). Some types of media intervene more than others when it comes to social interaction. We distinguish between indirect (weak) and direct form (strong) of mediatization:

“Direct mediatization refers to situations where formerly non-mediated activity converts to a mediated form, i.e., the activity is performed through interaction with a medium. ... Indirect mediatization is when a given activity is increasingly influenced with respect to form, content, or organization by mediagenic symbols or mechanisms.” (Hjarvard 2008:114-115).

Chatting is an example of direct form of mediazation. The form lectures have taken on is an example of indirect form of mediazation. Nowadays teachers use PowerPoint, video clips, pictures and so forth when teaching and the students might take notes on their laptops. Whether blogs are a direct form of mediazation depends on whether you see a blog as a diary gone online, which would make it a direct form of mediazation, or as something completely new. In other words, not something which has been mediatised, but something which is a consequence of the general mediazation.

Giddens claims that the development of mass printed media and electronic communication is of vital importance when it comes to the origins of high modernity. Like Hjarvard, Giddens is also concerned about the way media affects society. One of his main concerns is the way it ‘empties’ time and space. Giddens call this the ‘Separation of time and space’ and uses the following definition to describe the phenomena: “the disentangling of separated dimensions of ‘empty’ time and ‘empty’ space, making possible the articulation of disembedded social

relations across indefinite spans of time/space". (Giddens 1991:244). In other words, media makes it possible to interact with someone both across distances and without concern for time. For example we can send a text message and receive the answer hours or even days later. Also, with the invention of live images you get the opportunity to experience things you might never have been able to if you had not been there physically. For example, you are not only able hear your favourite band play, you can also see their shows even though you are not present at the concert. Giddens says: "As a result, the traditional connection between 'physical setting' and 'social situation' has been undermined; mediated social situation construct new communalities – and differences – between preconstituted forms of social experience." (Giddens 1991:84)

One of the consequences of media's intervention in society is the way in which it creates a notion of a 'we', or in other words, a 'realm of mediated experience'. (Giddens 1991) It is a sense of being part of the same community, a feeling created by the media because it makes it possible to connect people together across the world. We see this especially when there is an event which engages several nations at once, like the Olympics. When it comes to blogging the realm of mediated experience is important. It is what makes it possible to write blogs which are interesting not only for the near and the dear ones, but for anyone who stumbles by the blog. Because we see the same TV-shows, read the same news and listen to the same music we can easily relate to many of the same things. Because we have a sense of shared experience, which we have experienced through media, we can write to anyone in the country or even someone on the other side of the world.

3.2 A New Way of Communicating

The media has changed the way in which we communicate. Hjarvard says: "Communication, once bound to the physical meeting of individuals, face-to-face, has been succeeded by mediated communication, where the relationship between sender and receiver is altered in decisive respects." (Hjarvard 2008:109). This does not mean that mediated communication is less real than non-mediated communication, it is rather a matter of how the relationship between sender and receiver is changed. One aspect of this change, is that the sender has

very little control of the way his message is received and interpreted and how the receiver makes use of it. (Hjarvard 2008). For example, when you have a blog you have no control of the way your text is used. It could perhaps become the laughing stock for someone. When talking to someone in person, non-verbal communication is an important part of the conversation. We can read each other's reactions and therefore prevent misunderstandings and so forth, which we cannot do in most cases when interacting through various media. In addition to this, there is also the importance of intonation, which is an important tool when interpreting a message. Intonation and non-verbal signals are often crucial in order to understand jokes and irony. Misunderstandings are likely to occur when you can only interpret a message through the written language. This is probably why the emoticons⁴ have become an important part of chatting, text messaging and e-mailing.

However, the opportunities mediated communication provide are many. First and foremost is perhaps, as mentioned earlier, the way media "extend human communication abilities in both time and space" (Schulz 2004 in Hjarvard 2008:109). Thanks to the media it is now possible to communicate with anyone at any time anywhere in the world. When following a blog, you get a sense of knowing the author of the blog, a sense of having a friend perhaps, even though you might live miles apart. Another opportunity mediated communication allows is to keep several social interactions going at the same time. It is possible to watch TV while talking on the phone, you can check your email while listening to the radio and so forth. It is even possible to speak with several people in different places with the invention of chatting. Chatting allows you to have several windows open at the same time and therefore makes it possible to have many conversations going at the same time. Also, mediated communication makes it "possible to establish closer contact with less of a personal investment" (Hjarvard 2008:123). With personal network sites such as Facebook

⁴ Smiley faces and similar signs expressing different emotions.

makes it easier to stay in touch with friends and follow their everyday lives. Emails and text messages also make it easier to stay in touch. Writing someone an email or a text message demands far less investment than a personal visit. The same goes when you have a blog. You can tell friends, family what happened yesterday without face-to-face interaction. In a way, face to face encounters are replaced with online meetings. (Hjarvard 2008). In addition to this, mediated communication makes it easier to steer communication in whatever direction desired. For example writing an e-mail makes it possible to keep the communication straight to the point, whereas a face-to-face encounters intended to deliver the same message, might end up with a discussion on a completely different topic, because the communication cannot be steered as easily. The recipient of a written message can also decide when to answer it, which is convenient. Another advantage mediated communication has over non-mediated communication, is that you have more control of the image you display when interacting through a medium. (Hjarvard 2008). You do not have to worry about non-verbal signals revealing for example nervousness, or perhaps even a white lie. You also have the possibility to take the time you need to form a message. In other words, you have more time to think things through. Hjarvard says the following: "It is in this regard that media can help us manage the impressions we project to the world around us and, generally speaking, the narrower the channel of communication a medium offers, the easier it is to manage the communication." (Hjarvard 2008:124).

There are various degrees of interaction between sender and receiver when communicating through media. In some cases the receiver is unable to communicate with the sender, whereas in other cases a two way dialog is possible. John B Thomson distinguishes between three types of communication: face-to-face communication, mediated quasi-interaction and mediated interaction. Both face-to-face communication and mediated interaction is dialogic, mediated quasi-interaction, on the other hand, is monologic. (Hjarvard 2008). Examples of mediated interaction are emails, chatting, web-cams, text messages and telephoning. Mediated quasi-interaction, where the receiver cannot directly communicate with the sender, is for example kinds of mass media like newspaper, television and radio. Hjarvard argue that these categories are out of date, considering the fact that it is in fact possible for the receiver of the mass media to send a message back by for example a text message or an

email, therefore one can argue that this type of communication also has a dialogic perspective all though perhaps not in the same sense as face-to-face interaction. Instead of adapting Thomson's categories Hjarvard claims that a distinction between mediated and non-mediated is a better alternative and then to use subcategories such as one-way/two-way, interpersonal/mass, text/audio/visual and so forth to differentiate within the two main categories. (Hjarvard 2008). Blogs are one-way and two way at the same time. The author of the blog decides what he or she want to write about and can do so without being disturbed. On the other hand, most blogs allows their readers to comment on the different post and therefore creates a two-way communication.

3.3 Digital Storytelling

Nick Couldry has written an article about digital storytelling. By digital storytelling Couldry means: "the whole range of personal stories now being told in potentially public form using digital media resources". (Couldry 2009:374) In other words, blogs are part of digital storytelling. Couldry makes a list of features regarding digital storytelling which contrast with oral storytelling. He states that in digital storytelling there is:

- A pressure to mix text with other material (sound, video, still image) and more generally to make a visual presentation out of narrative, over and above its textual content.
- A pressure to limit the length of narrative, whether to take account of the limits of people's attention when reading text online, or to limit the file size of videos or soundtracks.
- A pressure towards standardization because of the sheer volume of material online and people's limited tolerance for formats, layouts or sequences whose intent they have difficulty interpreting
- A pressure to take account of the possibility that any narrative when posted online may have unintended and undesired audiences.

(Couldry 2009:382).

This features show that digital storytelling does to a great extent differ from oral storytelling. The fact that the length of the narrative is limited is interesting, this will in most cases influence the story told. Does this make the stories more concentrated or are parts of it left out? Most interesting is perhaps the fact that the author has to take account of the possibility that what he or she writes might be used in a way which was unintended. Couldry says: "If digital storytellers assume that their public narratives will be an archive that can be used against them in years to come, they may adjust the stories they tell online." (Couldry 2009:382). If this is so, the narratives of the bloggers is not the whole story, it is merely a selection which is appropriate and suitable for the blog medium. David Brake has discovered that this is the case when researching the way young people use MySpace. He discovered the following:

"[T]hey are holding back personal material that in theory might have gone into their MySpace or Facebook site. This problematizes any idea that social networking sites represent simply the mediatization (and publicization) of formerly private self-narratives... On the contrary, we might argue that by holding back personal narrative from such sites, young people are protecting an older private/public boundary rather than tolerating a shift in that boundary because of significant social pressure to have an online presence." (Couldry 2009:383).

This means that a blog is not simply a "diary gone online". Thus, when reading a blog you only get part of a person's narrative, the part which is appropriate for the public sphere.

3.4 Summary

In this chapter the mediatization of society and the way the mediatization has affected the way in which we communicate has been elaborated. What distinguishes digital storytelling from oral storytelling has also been explained.

4.0 Method

4.1 Choice of Method

The main thesis question is “How do young teenagers construct a self-identity in the blog format”? In order to answer the question an analysis of blogs was a natural choice of method, in other words a text analysis. Furthermore, the blogs have been analysed by both qualitative content analysis and form analysis. This because both what is said and how the blog format influences how it can be said is important. When the term content analysis is used in this thesis it should be understood as a systematic way of describing the content of a text. (Bergstrøm and Boreus 2005). The qualitative content analysis has been done based on the theoretical framework examined above. A qualitative method gives the researcher the possibility of getting in-depth insight into social phenomena. (Thagaard 2009:11). As identity is the main focus in this thesis an in-depth insight of what the stories told on the blogs contained was needed in order to answer my question.

4.2 Sampling

One of the most important criteria was that the blogs had the characterization of a personal diary. Another criteria was that the bloggers needed to be between the age of 13 to 16, as I wanted to research young teenagers’ blogs. Furthermore, the blog had to be updated on a weekly basis, having at least two posts per week. Another requirement was that the blog needed to have at least a medium amount of text, in order to stay away from blogs which more or less consist of pictures alone. I also wanted to have both genders represented as the project does not focus on any specific gender, both have the same relevance for the thesis. With these criteria in mind I ended up with the following four blogs:

1. Silje’s blog

Title: siljestene.blog.no

Web address: <http://siljestene.blogg.no/>

Silje is 16 years old.

2. Veslemøy's blog

Title: SETT HERFRA - en fjortis' bekjennelser (From this point of view - Confessions of a teenybopper)⁵

Web address: <http://settherfra.blogspot.com/>

Veslemøy is 14 years Old.

3. Andreas' blog

Title: Andreas Thunes andyshit.blog.no

Web address: <http://andyshit.blogg.no/>

Andreas is 14 years old

4. Eirik's blog

Title: eirik jørgensen <http://eirikss.blogg.no/>

Web address: <http://eirikss.blogg.no/>

Eirik is 14 years old.

When searching for blogs I used different methods. One was to visit popular blogs and then visit the blogs of those who had left comments. Another method was to visit blogs which other bloggers recommended by linking to them. The blog platform blogg.no has a search function where you can limit your search both by age and gender, which was very helpful in the process of sampling.

⁵ My translation. The English title will be used from now on.

To limit my material I chose to use blog posts from January. I chose to use January because the authors of the blogs did not know that I would analyse their blogs at that time and therefore the texts would not be influenced by knowing this, which could have been the case if I chose a month where they were informed that their blogs would be analyzed.

The first time a quotation from one of the blogs is used, the full web address is referred to. From then on the blogs will be referred to by the authors' names in the following way: Silje's blog, Veslemøy's blog, Andreas' blog and Eirik's blog.

The quotations included in the analysis are both in the original language, Norwegian, and in my translated English version. The actual analysis is based on the original language. It is important to keep in mind that when translating some of the original meaning may be altered.

4.3 How the Analysis Has Been Carried Out

The first step in the analysis after the sampling was done was to categorize the blog posts in the themes which occurred on the blog to get a picture of what the authors wrote about. Some posts included several themes, and the posts were therefore divided up in different sections in order to be placed correctly. The blogs were read many times in hope of not missing out of themes which could be present, but difficult to detect. The next step was to do another categorization in light of my research questions. I therefore used the categories digital storytelling, mediated communication and the following concepts from Giddens: narrative of the self, trajectory of the self, fateful moments and existential questions and finally internal referentiality. The category of digital storytelling included looking at the visual presentation, and the length of the posts, in other words, the form of the post as well as looking for whether or not the authors was conscious of the fact that the blogs may have unintended and undesired audience. In the category of mediated communication the focus was language use, to see how the blogs were affected by the fact that they are mediated communication.

4.4 Validity and Reliability

The question of validity is related to whether or not the method, in this case the analysis, is examining what it is intended to investigate. (Kvale 1997:165). As my research question is regarding how self-identity is constructed in blogs, I believe that a qualitative content analysis of blogs is a suitable way of answering the thesis question.

When it comes to reliability dealing with texts has an advantage as texts already available, in other words, not influenced by the researcher. Silverman says: "For this reason, textual data are, in principle, more reliable than observations." (Silverman 2006:285). One question of reliability, in this case, is concerning the categories used in the analysis. The question is whether other researcher would have categorized the same way. Because the blogs are still available and the categories I have used are visible in my analysis, it is possible to verify this. Another question is whether the actual analysis of the content would have been done the same way. As the content analysis has been done within the theoretical framework this makes it more reliable. Yet, it cannot be under swept under the rug that a content analysis of this kind will always have some subjectivity.

4.5 Ethical Reflections

All of the authors who participated in this thesis were informed that both text and images found on the blogs would be used, as well as their names. The authors had the possibility to withdraw from the project at any time, without giving an explanation. As nothing but what could be found on the blogs has been used in the thesis, all the material had already been posted online by the blogger. In other words, the author had already made the material public. Considering these fact, I believe that the ethical issues of analysis personal blogs has been taken into consideration.

5.0 Analysis

In this chapter the blogs will be analyzed in relation to the research questions. Therefore, the analysis has been divided into the themes digital storytelling, mediated communication and the reflexive project of the self.

When analyzing blogs both what is expressed, and how it is expressed is important. The blog format has conventions about what can be said and limitations about how you can express yourself. Therefore, the blogs will be analyzed by content and form analysis.

5.1 Presentation of the Blogs

Several themes are present in all of the blogs. This is not surprising, considering the fact that the authors are of more or less the same age. Most of the themes found in the blog are themes you would expect teens to write about in a blog, such as school, family, appearance, and friends.

The following themes are present in all of the blogs, or all but one blog:

Music (3/4)	Other blogs (4/4)
School (4/4)	Food (4/4)
Friends (4/4)	Exercise (4/4)
Fashion/shopping (4/4)	Family (3/4)
Looks/appearance (4/4)	TV (4/4)
Own blog (4/4)	Politics (3/4)

In addition to these themes each author has themes which they alone write about.

The four blogs will now be given a short presentation to give a picture of what recognizes each of them.

Silje's Blog

Title: siljestene.blog.no

Silje's blog had 40 posts in January.

Silje's blog is usually updated every day. Some days she also writes two or three posts. The blog focuses on what Silje does in her everyday life and is therefore very action orientated. Because Silje is in her first year of General Studies (videregående), school is a big part of her life and the blog mirrors this. She often writes about what she has done at school, and about homework, tests and assignments. Other topics often mentioned are exercising, friends, family, fashion and shopping, food and appearance. Silje often writes about her appearance in a negative manner, especially when commenting on pictures of herself. What Silje writes about the most is the fact that she is messy, in a wide sense. As much as 15 of the posts say something about this theme. She very often writes about her being late, about her losing things, about her room being messy and the fact that she postpones the cleaning.

(<http://siljestene.blogg.no/>)

Veslemøy's Blog

Title: From this point of view - Confessions of a teenybopper

Veslemøy's blog had 11 posts in January. Although this is well below the average amount, they are of considerable length compared to an average blog post written by a teenager. Veslemøy's blog is less concerned about what she has done and focuses more on her thoughts and opinions. Frequently mentioned topics include: school, family, music, shopping and fashion and food. When reading the blog you get the impression that being different is something Veslemøy strives for. Topics which are categorized as politics are most often mentioned on Veslemøy's blog. Twice she explicitly expresses her interest in politics, whereas other posts express her political opinions, as for example equal rights no matter sexual orientation and her disregard for religion. (<http://settherfra.blogspot.com/>)

Andreas's Blog

Title: Andreas Thunes andyshit.blog.no

Andreas' blog had 36 posts in January. Like Silje's blog Andreas' blog also revolves around his everyday life. Andreas often arranges contests between other bloggers which he calls blog

vs. blog, where you can vote for your favourite. He also has a Q and A⁶ during January. Frequently mentioned topics are school, friends, music and food. What Andreas writes about the most, in fact, is his own blog. As many as 17 times he mentions his own blog. In other words, he is very conscious about his blog. He is often making comments about his posts. For example he apologizes if a post is short and comments if he considers a post strange or not good enough. He also writes that he does not have anything to write about. The design of the blog is also mentioned a couple of times. (<http://andyshit.blogg.no/>)

Eirik's Blog

Title: eirik jørgensen <http://eirikss.blogg.no/>

Eirik's blog had 40 posts in January. Like Andreas Eirik also did a Q and A in January. Although the posts on Eirik's blog often evolve around his everyday life he also quite often expresses his thoughts and opinions. Frequently mentioned topics are school, friends, music, shopping and fashion, food, appearance and politics. When Eirik mentions political topics he writes longer posts than usual. Two posts from January are distinctive from the others. They have a more philosophical or existential character than the rest. In these posts Eirik writes about loneliness, emptiness and change. He also writes that everything feels wrong and he wishes things could go back to the way they were. (<http://eirikss.blogg.no/>)

5.2 Digital Storytelling

The blogs I have analyzed are according to Couldry's definition digital stories because they are personal stories told in public form using a digital media resource. (Couldry 2009).

⁶ Q and A is an abbreviation from Questions and Answers. The readers can send questions to the blogger, which he will answer in a post on the blog.

When creating a blog, there are several different blog platforms to choose from. Three of the bloggers, Silje, Andreas and Eirik, use the same Norwegian blog platform: blogg.no. Veslemøy, on the other hand uses blogspot.com. The two platforms are very similar. You can post pictures, videos and audio clips on both of them, and you can also design your own header. Therefore, the layout of the blogs is similar. Also, the way they design a post is quite similar for all of the four authors. The blog posts usually have a medium amount of text. Veslemøy's posts are longer than the others, though. Some of her posts might be considered as long. All of the bloggers very often post pictures on their blogs. Indeed, almost every post has a picture. A typical blog post will, therefore, look like this:

koseligste og hyggeligste på lenge?

16.jan.2010 kl.23:19 i Blogg 9 kommentarer

Hei og god kveld i stugo!

Dagen i dag har vært, tja, den kosligste og hyggeligste på lenge? Gina og jeg har vært i Bærum, på Sandvika i stort sett hele dag. I hvert fall siden klokken halv fire. Vi møtte og ble kjent Eirik Gjendemsjø, Mina og Håvard - superhyggelige mennesker! Herregud, det var så utrolig morsomt, koselig og hyggelig! Vi ble også sånn halvveis kjent med to andre jenter som jeg ikke husker navnet på. Flaut...

Alt i alt har jeg storkost meg i hele dag! Det håper jeg dere andre også har gjort? Spørsmålet var egentlig rettet til friendsa jeg var med, hehe. Så spørsmål til dere; hva har du gjort i dag, kost deg sånn som meg? Hope so!



Flere bilder kommer i morgen, i think.

16.jan.2010 kl.23:19 i Blogg 9 kommentarer Permalenke Tips en venn [Følj bloggen](#)

7

(<http://eirikss.blogg.no/>)

⁷ This post is not translated, because the content is not relevant to show the look of a typical blog post.

This post was made using the blogg.no platform. The title is at the top of the post, then we see the date and time the entry was posted and under which category it has been posted. In this case the category is simply blog. We also get to see how many comments the post has. Next, the text follows and then there is a picture with a comment. At the end the date, time and number of comments are repeated. At blogspot.com this only appears at the end.

Sometimes the choice of picture seems more or less random, as several of the pictures posted do not illustrate the content of the post. All of the bloggers also post audio files of music and music videos. Sometimes the music illustrates what they have written about, other times they simply want to share their favourite music. The reason for mixing text with pictures, sounds and video can be explained by Couldry's theory of digital storytelling. He states that there is: "a pressure to mix text with other material (sound, video, still image) and more generally to make a visual presentation out of narrative, over and above its textual content." (Couldry 2009:382). All of the bloggers seem to be concerned about the visual presentation of the blog considering the amount of pictures and the posting of videos and audio files. Because the visual effects sometimes seem random in relation to the content of the post, this could mean that the bloggers think that having a picture is of more importance than the picture illustrating the post. In other words, sometimes the picture is only there to make the visual presentation look good. This would explain the use of random pictures in a post. When Eirik is giving tips to his readers of how to be a better blogger, he confirms what Couldry says. One tip is to always have a picture, and Eirik usually practises what he preaches.

Regarding the length of narrative Couldry says "there is a pressure to limit the length of narrative, whether to take account of the limits of people's attention when reading text online, or to limit the file size of videos or soundtracks." (Couldry 2009:382). Three of the authors have more or less the same average length on their posts. Veslemøy is the exception who has longer posts than the others. Whether it is a conscious choice of the bloggers to have a medium amount of text or not, is hard to say. Still, because so many of the posts have more or less the same amount of text I do not believe this a coincidence. As the bloggers often refer to reading other blogs, they might have experienced that too long post gets

uninteresting. Also, blogs in general seldom have long texts and the bloggers might be affected by this. In other words, a medium amount of text seems to be a template within blogging. However, although most of the posts fit this description, it is not difficult to find exceptions. Longer texts do also occur. It is usually when expressing their thoughts and opinions that the authors tend to write longer posts. This explains why Veslemøy's blog has longer posts than the rest, as she focuses less on what she does and more on her thoughts. Eirik also has more posts, than Silje and Andreas do, where his thoughts and opinions are the focus. However, the fact that one of the criteria in the sampling of the blogs was that they had at least a medium amount of text, must be taken into consideration

The fact that all of the posts are so similar when it comes to both layout and amount of text might be explained by what Couldry says about standardization: "[There is] A pressure towards standardization because of the sheer volume of material online and people's limited tolerance for formats, layouts or sequences whose intent they have difficulty interpreting" (Couldry 2009:382). Whether or not the bloggers consciously standardize their blogs we do not know. However because they use more or less the same layout on their posts and use a blog platform similar to what most bloggers use, the look of the blogs are very typical.

Although all of the blogs have a personal character, there are some things the bloggers do not share. For example, both Andreas and Eirik get asked where they go to school in the Q and A. They then answer in the following way. (The first answer is from Andreas and the second from Eirik.)

Jeg tror jeg lar være å svare på det spørsmålet, av visse grunner! (<http://eirikss.blogg.no/>)

I don't think I will answer that question, for certain reasons!

Vil egentlig ikke si hvilken skole jeg går på, hvis du skjønner? (<http://andyshit.blogg.no/>)

Don't really want to say which school I attend, if you know what I mean?

It seems that both of the answers imply that not giving away the information of which school they attend is a way of protecting their privacy. Couldry states the following when it comes to posting a narrative online: "[there is] a pressure to take account of the possibility that any

narrative when posted online may have unintended and undesired audiences.” (Couldry 2009:382). It seems that the male authors take this into consideration when not answering the question. Another time, Eirik posts the following entry:

Jeg endrer meg med tiden. Ting er ikke som det var før. Alt er snudd på hodet. Livet mitt er snudd på hodet. Alt er feil. Jeg vil ikke at ting skal være feil. Jeg vil bare at ting som skal være som før. Men ingenting kommer til å bli som før. Ikke etter **dette**⁸.

Etter **dette**⁹ kommer det aldri til å bli som før. Alt er feil. Ingenting er riktig. Selv om jeg skulle ønske det. Livet mitt har blitt et rent helvete. Rett og slett et helvete. Jeg føler at alt er min feil. Men det er ikke det. Alt er ikke min feil. Det er alles feil. Faen.” (Eirik’s blog)

I change with the times. Things are not like they used to be. Everything is turned upside down. My life is turned upside down. Everything is wrong. I don’t want things to be wrong. I want everything to be like it used to be. But nothing will ever be like before. Not after **this**¹⁰.

After **this**¹¹ nothing will be like it used to. Everything is wrong. Nothing is right. Even though I wish it was. My life has become a living hell. Really, a living hell. I feel that everything is my fault. But it’s not. Everything is not my fault. It’s everybody’s fault. Fuck.

It is evident that something has happened to Eirik, which has affected him a lot, but he does not say what it is. He only refers to it as “this”. In other words, although he wants to share that something has happened, it seems that exactly what has happened is not something he

⁸ My emphasis

⁹ My emphasis

¹⁰ My emphasis

¹¹ My emphasis

wants to share. It could be that he thinks this is too private. It could also be that he is protecting someone else's privacy, considering the fact that he reveals that "this" does not only concern him when he say "it's everybody's fault".

Although it is evident that the authors sometimes leave out bits of the narrative or find some things not to be appropriate for the blog, other times it seems that the bloggers do not take into consideration the fact that anyone can read their blog at all. For example Eirik admits to having cheated on his blog.

Dere vet nynorsken jeg var så sint på her om dagen? Det var fordi jeg skulle ha prøve i drittfagen, og derfor utskjellinge - men, til tross for null lesing og litt titting (kremt) så gikk det faktisk ganske bra - følte jeg. Utrolig nok. Og jeg som trodde jeg skulle stryke. ... Får jo bare vente på karakteren da. Gru/gleder meg. (Eirik's blog)

You know the nynorsk¹² I was so mad at the other day? It was because of a test in the stupid subject, that's what all the name calling was all about, but even though I didn't study at all, and a little sneak peak (hmpf), I actually think it went rather well. Amazingly enough. And I thought I would fail. ...Just have to wait for the grade, now. Excited/anxious.

His classmates, and teacher for that matter, can read the blog and get this information. If the teacher gets to know Eirik has cheated, this might have consequences.

Both Andreas and Veslemøy share their grades on the blog, which for some might be considered very private. Evidently, they do not think this is too private to share even though they are not satisfied with the grades.

¹² Ny norsk is one of the two official written languages in Norway. Bokmål is the other one. Both languages are taught in Norwegian schools.

One topic which you might expect to find in a teenagers blog is love. None of them write anything about love or being in love.

Eirik gets asked three questions concerning this topic in the Q and A and answers the following way:

Er du keen på noen? Hvem?

Hmmm...**Har du klint før?** Hallo? Hvem har ikke det? **Hvor mange har du vært sammen med?** Hallo? Hvem har ikke det? (Eirik's blog)

Do you fancy anyone? Who?

Hmmm... **Have you ever made out with anyone before?** Hello? Who hasn't? **How many have girlfriends have you had?** Hello? Who hasn't?

Andreas also gets asked one question about love, or being in love:

Liker du noen? Jeg liker ganske mange, jeg da! (Andreas' blog)

Du you like anyone? I like quite a lot of people!

Both of them avoid giving proper answers to the questions. It could be because they think this is too private.

5.2.1 Summary

Three of the bloggers use the same blog platform. Although Veslemøy uses another kind, it is quite similar to what the three other use. Therefore, the design of the blogs looks very alike. So does the layout of the blog posts. They usually have a medium amount of text. However, there are several posts where the texts are longer. This is usually when the bloggers express their opinions or thoughts. All of the authors mix text with other material, for example videos, audio clips and pictures. Most common is using pictures and most of the blog posts have at least one picture. Sometimes the illustrations do not illustrate the content of the text, they simply contribute to the visualization of the post. Considering the amount of visual effects the visual presentation seems very important to the bloggers. Because the posts are so similar to each other, they seem standardized. Even though the blogs have a very personal character there are some things they do not share with their readers. We see this, for example, when both Andreas and Eirik do not wish to answer which school they attend and when Eirik is referring to an event which seems very significant, but does not say what

the actually occurred. One topic one might expect to find in teenagers' blogs is love. None of the authors mention this topic. This could be a way of protecting their privacy. Although there seems to be an idea that certain things are not appropriate for the blog, it sometimes seems as if they do not take into consideration the fact that anyone can read their blogs, as for example when Eirik admits having cheated on his blog.

5.3 Mediated Communication

When writing a blog the author is dealing with a mediated form of communication. This affects the entire blog. One difference between face-to-face communication and mediated communication is that "the relationship between sender and receiver is altered in decisive respects." (Hjarvard 2008:109). Hjarvard is, as Couldry, also concerned about the fact that the sender has very little control of the way his message is received and interpreted and how the receiver makes use of it. (Hjarvard 2008). Written language is easier misinterpreted than spoken language as you cannot make use of body language or intonation to interpret the message. Although blogs are written, they use a written language which has an oral character. When reading a blog you get a feeling that the person speaks to you. The language appears oral for several reasons. For example, they often use onomatopoeias¹³ such as: ha-ha, he he, hmm, ah, oh, grr, whoo. Andreas writes the following at the end of a post:

Haha, for et innlegg. (Andreas' blog)

Haha, what a post!

This indicates that Andreas is laughing because he thinks his post is silly or stupid. Using onomatopoeias may prevent the readers from misunderstanding what the authors have

¹³ A word that imitates a sound.

written. If Andreas had only written “*what a post*”, you might have thought he actually liked the post. When using irony, which all of the bloggers do, onomatopoeias help the readers to understand the fact that the blogger is being ironic.

Using irony when commenting on their own looks, is very common among the four bloggers. For example Eirik writes the following after posting a picture:

Mmm... Diggen sjæl! (Eirik’s blog)

Mmm.. Mr. Handsome himself!

Silje uses irony when talking about how she feels about maths:

Og jeg som elsker matte da..
(<http://siljestene.blogg.no/>)

And don’t I love maths..

This could of course be read as if they were not being ironic. There are no onomatopoeias which indicate that they are using irony. However, the way they use the language makes it clear that they are not serious. Eirik is exaggerating, which is a clue to understanding his irony. Also, the fact that it is not common to say things like this about your own appearance, more or less makes you instantly think he is being ironic. Silje is also exaggerating, and the two dots at the end of the sentence is a clue. The context is also important to understand the irony.

Sometimes, in order to avoid misunderstandings, the bloggers explicitly say that they are kidding. For example, at the end of a post where Eirik argues that global warming might not be such a bad idea after all, he writes the following:

Hvis dere ser humoren i dette, kanskje
dere ser det fra ett litt annet
perspektiv?(Eirik’s blog)

If you see the humour in this, you might
be looking at it from a different point of
view.

Emoticons help to enhance what the bloggers are expressing. When Eirik is asked how many readers he has on the blog, for example, he answers like this:

Rundt om kring hundre hver dag :))
(Eirik’s blog)

A bout a hundred a day :))

The smiley faces indicate that this is something he is really happy about. Hearts like this ♥ also appear in several of the blogs. Silje uses them quite often. For example like this:

Idag har jeg også bakt kanelbullar ♥ (Silje's blog)

Today I have also baked cinnamon buns ♥

This probably indicates that she likes to bake and eat cinnamon buns. Sometimes Silje also puts hearts behind her friends' names when she mentions them, which probably is a way of saying that she loves them. Here is an example:

Meg og Caroline ♥ (Silje's blog)

Me and Caroline ♥

Another reason why the text gets an oral character is because the authors use a lot of slang, as teenagers often do when speaking. Part of their slang makes use of English words, or English words which have been Norwegianized. This is probably because of the large amount of English which Norwegian teenagers are exposed to through various media. It is quite common to see an English word in the middle of a Norwegian sentence in the blogs. For example like this:

En perfekt avslutning på en *chill*¹⁴ dag er smågodt (Silje's blog)

The perfect ending of a *chill*¹⁵ day is eating candy.

Hjarvard claims that mediated communication makes it "possible to establish closer contact with less of a personal investment" (Hjarvard 2008:123). As most of the blog entries are about what the bloggers do in their everyday life, following a blog will keep you updated

¹⁴ My emphasis

¹⁵ My emphasis

about the author. Without face-to-face interaction, friends and family will get to know what is happening in the bloggers life. Whether keeping friends and family updated is a motivating factor for the authors we do not know. Still, whoever reads the blogs, will be updated as a consequence. We do not know whether the author's intention is writing for the near and the dear ones or for a larger audience. However, the blogs are available to read for anyone and it is common to read a blog even though you do not know the blogger. Often the authors refer to mediated experiences which the readers are also likely to have experienced. This might be why a stranger's blog is interesting – you may in fact have shared experiences. For example two of the bloggers write about having seen the 3D movie Avatar and recommend others to do the same. The first quotation is from Andreas's blog, the second is from Silje's:

Hehe, igår fikk jeg endelig sett Avatar, og makan til film! Den var helt utrolig bra, særlig siden den var i 3D. Den var både spennende, trist og morsom! Helt klart min nye favoritt film. Og de som ikke har sett den; løp ned til nærmeste kino og bestill billetter! *haha*. **Har du sett Avatar, hva syns du?** (Andreas' blog)

Hehe, yesterday I finally got to see Avatar. And what a movie! It was amazing, especially because it was in 3D. It was exciting, sad and funny! Definitely my new favourite movie. And for those who haven't seen it yet, run to your nearest cinema and get some tickets! *Haha*. **Have you seen Avatar, what do you think?**

Er nettopp kommet hjem fra kinoen. Var og så Avatar, og den var helt utrolig bra! Hadde litt dårlige forventninger etter jeg så traileren, men jeg tok visst feil. Den var kanskje *litt* for engasjerende da, tror jeg levde meg så inn i filmen mens jeg så på den at jeg raskt ble veldig godt lagt merke til. Hehe, i hvertfall så anbefales absolutt! (Silje's blog)

I just got back from the cinema. I went to see Avatar, and it was amazing! My expectations were a bit low after seeing the trailer, but apparently I was wrong. It might actually be a bit too exciting, I think I was so engaged in the movie while watching it, that people quickly took notice of me. Hehe, anyways I really recommend it!

Although the bloggers often refer to mediated experiences which anyone can relate to, they also often refer to their friends by name without explaining who they are. In other words, it seems as though they expect the reader to know who their friends are. Silje, for example, writes the following:

jeg skal på jentekveld klokken sju, til
Synne som har bursdag idag♥ (Silje's
blog)

I'm going to a girls night at seven, at
Synne's who is having her birthday
today♥

One way of interpreting this phenomena, is that the intended audience of the blogs are people they know, who are already familiar with their friends. However, it could also be that the bloggers think that because they often post pictures of their friends along with their names, you will actually know their friends by name if you follow their blogs for a while. This is a typical example of posting a picture with a friend followed by the friend's name:



Meg og Caroline ♥ (Silje's blog)

Me and Caroline ♥

This picture and the comment with the heart exemplify the importance of illustrations. In this case, the picture illustrates who Caroline is, in other words, Silje does not have to explain who she is. The heart illustrates Silje's feelings towards her. Hence, pictures and emoticons becomes a significant part of expressing their narratives.

When communicating through a medium you have more control of the image you display, than you have with face-to-face communication. (Hjarvard 2008). Although body language and intonation can be helpful when interpreting a message and prevent misunderstandings, they also often reveal your true feelings, like nervousness for example. Telling a lie is far easier when you do not have to worry about your body language revealing the truth. When writing you also have the opportunity to use as much time as you like to form the message. Hjarvard says the following: "It is in this regard that media can help us manage the

impressions we project to the world around us and, generally speaking, the narrower the channel of communication a medium offers, the easier it is to manage the communication.” (Hjarvard 2008:124). For example, the bloggers can do things in order to be able to write about them at the blog, like exercising, to give off a good impression.

Furthermore, when writing a blog you are using a medium where you alone decide what should be communicated. You can steer the communication in whatever way you like. However, as the bloggers allow their readers to comment on their post, they can be affected by the comments if they get negative feedback. Eirik, however, is very clear about the fact that he decides what he can write about on his blog after getting some comments on different posts where he has expressed his opinions:

Dette er min blogg. Min blogg - mine meninger. Jeg skjønner virkelig ikke hvorfor folk skal klikke helt, fordi jeg skriver mine meninger. Dette er liksom en blogg, hvor man skriver fritt og skrabler ned hva man mener. Velkommen til 2010. Alt er ikke tabu lenger. Men tydeligvis er det enkelte som må hakke, kommentere og klikke helt fordi jeg skriver mine meninger. Hvor lavt går det ann å synke? Er jeg plutselig fjortis fordi jeg ikke liker nynorsk? Kom igjen! Finn på noe litt mer orginalt, a', please! Og sorry for at jeg mener MGP 2010 suger hardt! Haha, jeg ler. Bare ro dere ned litt a, pms- lesere! (Eirik's blog)

This is my blog. My blog – my opinions. I really don't understand why people go mental, because I write my opinions. This is like a blog, where one writes freely and scribbles down what you believe. Welcome to 2010. Everything is not taboo anymore. But, obviously, someone has to nag, comment and go mental because I write my opinions. How low can one sink? Am I suddenly a teenybopper because I don't like nynorsk? Come on! Think of something more original, please! And sorry because I think MGP 2010 blows! Haha, I laugh. Just chill out, pms-readers!

When it comes to keeping the blogs updated, the authors of the blogs decide when to post new entries. In other words, you write when it is convenient for you. The reader has the

same advantage, the blog can be read whenever it suits him or her as the blogs are always available for the readers.

5.3.1 Summary

All of the authors use a written language which has an oral character. Therefore, you often get the feeling that the blogger is speaking to you. One of the reasons why the language appears as oral is because of the use of onomatopoeias. The use of slang has the same affect. All of the bloggers use irony quite a lot. Sometimes, in order to avoid misunderstandings, they explicitly say that they are joking. To enhance what they are expressing the bloggers often use emoticons. Therefore, this becomes an important part of their narrative. Pictures are another important aspect, they use them to illustrate what they have done and to present their friends. Often, the authors refer to mediated experiences on the blog, which their readers are also likely to have experienced. When writing a blog you have more control of the image you display than you do with face-to-face communication. The author alone decides which part of his or her life they want to share. The bloggers might even do things, like exercising for example, in order to be able to blog about them. The blogger also have the advantage of being able to use as much time as he or she would like on a post. The readers can read the blog whenever it suits him or her, as the blog is always available.

5.4 The Reflexive Project of the Self

5.4.1 Narrative of the Self

The Narrative of the self is a way of understanding who we are in terms of the different stories of our life. "It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self" (Giddens 1991:54). The blogs serve as a narrative of the self for all of the authors. They sort out different stories from their everyday life which they post on the blog. Most common is writing about what they have done the same day they write the post or the day before. Many posts therefore start the following way: "Today I..." or "Yesterday I".

As the bloggers are 14 to 16 years old school takes up a lot of their time, and therefore school is an important part of their narrative. The readers get to know what they are learning about, about tests, homework and their feelings towards going to school. My material starts at the 1 of January, at the end of the Christmas holiday. Therefore, all of the bloggers have had time off school. Both Eirik and Andreas express that they do not want to go back to school. Eirik posts the following the day before school starts up again:

Så var det tilbake på skolebenken. Jeg kunne godt tenkt meg ett par uker ekstra ferie, men neida. Her er det algebra og Jesus som skal læres! Herregud, bare tanken på skole gjør meg deprimert med én eneste gang. Etter en juleferie på litt over to uker, kommer det til å bli helt annerledes å gjøre lekser, pugge til prøver og stå opp tidlig. Om bare noen timer sitter jeg vel limt på skolebenken, med matteboka som bestevenn. ... Det er bare noe deprimerende dritt med å starte på skolen etter ferien, sant?

(Eirik's blog)

Back to school. I would really like another couple of weeks of vacation, but no. It's time to learn about algebra and Jesus. Oh my god, just the thought of school is instantly making me depressed. After having a two week long break because of the holidays, it will be totally different to do my homework, study and get up early. In just a couple of hours, I'm stuck at my desk, having the maths book as my bestfriend. ... Having to start up school after the holidays is just really depressing, right?

Andreas expresses himself in more or less the same way. Veslemøy also expresses that she wishes she did not have to go to school, but this is not in relation to the holiday, it is on a general basis she says this. When mentioning school the authors seldom say anything positive. They usually complain about too much homework, about having tests and about how much of their time school is taking. They even blame not having time for the blog on school. Andreas writes:

Har ikke vært den beste bloggeren for tiden, noe som skyldes skole. Vi har sånn plutselig fått utrolig mye lekser som må gjøres! (Andreas' blog)

Haven't been the best blogger lately, because of school. All of a sudden we have an unbelievable load of homework to do!

Andreas and Veslemøy do the same thing. Andreas also expresses that he is bored at school. Eirik complains about some of the things he has to learn at school, like learning to read notes in music. He even has an entire post dedicated to his strong opinion about the subject Nynorsk and why it is a total waste of time. Although more or less every post mentioning school is negative, there are some exceptions. When Eirik gets an assignment to make a music video he is very excited:

På skolen i morgen, skal vi lage musikkvideo! Ok, det hørtet litt kult ut, eller hva? Jeg gleder meg sykt! Filmen skal vises på skolens filmfestival, og gudene vite hva det er. Småbarna skal se på, så derfor må vi velge en sang på norsk. Ikke at det er noe problemo. Vi skal ressigere filmen helt selv, og få karakter på den. Glæd mæ! (Eirik's blog)

At school tomorrow, we are making a music video! Okay, that does sound a bit cool, right? I'm so excited! The movie is going to be shown at the schools film festival, whatever that might be. The small kids are watching to, so we have to choose a Norwegian song. That's no problemo though. We're going to direct the movie ourselves, and get graded. Can't wait!

When Silje is having a swing class at school she says it is fun. Eirik also admits that hiking with the class is fun, although he was negative at first.

Silje shares her study habits on the blog. She expresses herself in a manner which makes you think she knows they could get better. She says she often postpones her homework and sits up all night the day before an assignment is due.

Jeg er en alt for flink utsetter, og pleier som regel alltid å sitte på torsdagen før en innlevering med hundre oppgaver jeg *enda* ikke har gjort. Men de blir som regel levert inn, etter å ha sittet halve natten oppe for å gjøre dem ferdig. Smart Silje, smart! (Silje's blog)

I'm just way too good at postponing, and I usually sit the Thursday before an assignment is due with a hundred exercises I *still* haven't done. But they usually get handed in, after sitting up half the night to get them done. Clever Silje, clever!

Once she also reveals that she has forgotten about a math test the next day.

MATTEPRØVEN. F... årh. Gjett om jeg hadde glemt den ut. Hei stryk! Så da var det bare å begynne å øve. (Silje's blog)

The mathtest! F... ohhh. Had I forgotten about that! Hello fail! Then it was just to start reading.

Friends also play a significant part in the authors' stories and are therefore often mentioned on the blogs. Often, the authors just mention the fact that they have been or are going to hang out with their friends. For example in this way:

Jeg skal være nede hos venninna mi klokken seks (Silje's blog)

I will be down at my friend's at six o'clock

Other posts mention what they do with their friends, like playing in the snow, or watching a movie. Sometimes they also express their feelings towards them. Veslemøy has one post which is completely dedicated to one of her closest friends. The post describes the way she feels about her friend and she also compliments her looks. She also describes their relationship, how long they have known each other and how the relationship has evolved. In another post she expresses how proud she is of her friend Lina, who has played one of the leading parts in a big movie:

... min herlige utrolige fantastiske venn;
[Lina](#) spiller Valborg. Hun er veldig, veldig flink! Jeg ble litt rørt og veldig stolt over at bestevennen min er så utrolig flink og så stoor.
(<http://settherfra.blogspot.com/>)

... my lovely incredible amazing friend;
[Lina](#) plays Valborg. She is, very, very good! I was a bit touched and very proud that my best friend is so god and so greaaate!

Because she think so highly of her friends and expresses this on her blog you get the impression that friends are very important to Veslemøy. In the Q and A Andreas gets asked what he is most afraid of in the world and answers the following:

Å miste noen i familien eller nære venner. (Andreas' blog)

To lose someone in my family or close friends.

Because of the amount of posts mentioning friends they become an important part of the narratives of all the blogs.

Considering the fact that all of the bloggers still live at home, they are surrounded by their family every day. In other words, their families naturally play a part in their narratives. Both of the girls mention their family quite often and Andreas mentions his family a couple of times. In contrast, Eirik does not mention his family in any of the posts from January. When Silje mentions her parents, it is usually a statement about their natural presence in her life. Of Veslemøy's eleven posts seven of them mention members of her family or family relationships. She mentions the fact that her parents are divorced in two of them. She also says that she believes this has affected her:

Foreldrene mine skilte seg da jeg var omtrent ni år, og jeg hadde nok vært en betraktelig anderledes person hvis ikke det hadde skjedd.. (Veslemøy's blog)

My parents divorced when I was about nine years old, and I would probably be a considerably different person if that had not happened..

Because Veslemøy says she believes she would have been a very different person if this had not happened, it seems that Veslemøy is referring to a fateful moment in her life, which will be elaborated below. When reading the blog you understand that Veslemøy lives with her mother and stepfather. Usually when she mentions them it is because of their natural presence in her life. Even though she lives with a stepparent she writes about the group as a family. She uses the pronoun "we". She states the following about her family, which includes her stepfather:

Fordi vi¹⁶ er så miljøvennlige (Veslemøy's blog)

Because we are so environmentally friendly.

In other words, you get the impression that she identifies with her stepfather as he is included in her 'we'. Veslemøy's sister is mentioned twice in the blog in a way that makes

¹⁶ My emphasis

you think Veslemøy admires her sister very much and cares a lot about her. Here is one example:

I dag hadde [min vakre søster](#) bursdag
(hun er sikkert mektig lei av at jeg hele
tiden kaller henne vakker og herlig og
fantastisk hele tiden) (Veslemøy's blog)

Today was my beautiful sister's birthday
(she is probably very tired of me calling
her pretty and lovely and amazing all the
time)

5.4.1.1 Lifestyle

Your choice of lifestyle tells the world around you who you are. It is the image you display. It is the choice of who to be. (Giddens 1991). In many ways a blog is a presentation of a person's lifestyle. What kind of clothes you wear, what you eat, what you do, your hobbies and interests, who you spend your time with and so forth is typical blog-material. This is evident when reading all four blogs.

An important part of a person's lifestyle is appearance. Appearance is also an important part of all of the blogs. According to Giddens a person's appearance gives clues to interpreting a person's actions. In many ways your appearance is the image you display to the rest of the world. Because appearance is such an important ingredient in displaying who you are, it becomes a central aspect of the reflexive project of the self. Thus the aspect of the body is not a simple notion. (Giddens 1991).

In all of the blogs pictures of the author appear frequently. Because of the frequency of pictures on the blogs, the readers do not only know what the blogger looks like, but also get an idea of the bloggers choice of clothing. Several times the pictures are followed by the bloggers commenting on their appearance in the pictures in a negative manner, often using irony.

Eirik has posted these pictures in three different posts.



Mmm... Diggen sjæl! Redigert og retusjert så det holder. Kremt. (Eirik's blog)

Mmm... Mr. Handsome himself. Edited and retouched enough. Hmpf.



Bare for å nevne det, så er bildet 100 prosent naturlig. Deeeilig... Næt. (Eirik's blog)

Just worth mentioning, this picture is 100 prosent natural. Hoooot. Not.



Dette er vel det styggeste bildet som er tatt av meg ever? (Eirik's blog)

This is probably the ugliest picture taken of me ever?

It is interesting, that he chooses to post the pictures even though he is not satisfied with them.

Silje does the exact same thing:



Oi, skjer'a pena? (Siljes' blog)

Oops, what's up beautiful?



Dette utrolig gamle bildet var da veldig vakkert (Silje's blog)

This incredible old picture was really pretty



Sykt fotogent bilde tatt med webkamera
på skolen. (Silje's blog)

Massively photogenic picture taken with
a webcam at school.

In Silje's blog you find her writing similar comments many times.

Andreas comments on his appearance in a picture the following way:



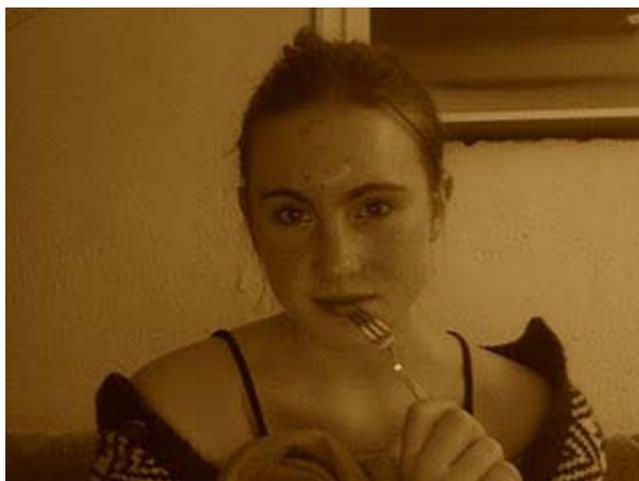
lol¹⁷ (Andreas' blog)

Lol

However, this is not necessarily negative. The comment could merely mean that he is laughing because he has an odd expression in the picture and not laughing about his appearance in general.

Veslemøy's blog is not an exception when it comes to commenting negatively on her own appearance.

¹⁷ (laughing out loud)



Æsj, se på a. Hu hakke sminke
(Veslemøy's blog)

Yuk, look at here. She has no make-up.

She posts the picture and the comment as part of an entry in which she writes about not feeling good about being seen without wearing make-up, which we will get back to below.

Although all of the bloggers have posted pictures where they comment on their appearance in a negative manner, if you consider Andreas's comment to be negative, they very often post pictures of themselves which they do not comment at all. However, none of them comment their appearance in a picture in a positive way either. Not only when commenting on their pictures do the bloggers mention their own appearance. They comment on their clothing, hair, tan, and what they look in general. Their comments are seldom positive. Though, once Andreas says his new hair cut looks good:

klippen var bra! (Andreas' blog)

The hair cut was good!

Furthermore, once Veslemøy talks about striving to be different, both in concern as to how to act and how to dress, which could be considered a positive comment about her looks or sense of style:

Det er så dumt at det er så mye regler på hvordan folk skal oppføre seg, kle seg, uttale seg og se ut. Jeg er så utrolig lei av det. Det gjør livet en smule vanskeligere

It's so stupid that there's so many rules about how to act, dress, speak and look. I'm so incredible tired of it. It makes life a bit harder to live. Why is everyone

å leve. Hvorfor er det sånn i dag at det er om å gjøre å skille seg minst ut? Er det så gøy? Jeg streber mye heller etter å være spesiell og anderledes så folk legger merke til meg. (Veslemøy's blog)

these days trying to be like everyone else? Is that so fun? I would rather strive to be special and different so people would notice me.

The way a person dresses, sends out a signal of how that person wants to be perceived. (Giddens 1991). Veslemøy wants to be perceived as different, and therefore she also wants to avoid looking like everyone else. In other words, her choice of clothing reflects who she wants to be.

Except for these two comments about appearance, the rest are neutral or negative. Here are a few examples of negative commentaries. Silje posts a random picture in an entry after being to the dentist and writes the following:

Dette bildet passet jo egentlig ikke inn, men jeg føler meg ikke særlig flatterende akkurat nå! (Silje's blog)

This picture didn't really fit the post, but I'm feeling particular flattering right now!

In other words, instead of posting a picture of the way she looks after visiting the dentist, where she does not look flattering, she posts a random picture she is more satisfied with. Another time, Silje comments about her weight. She does so by telling a joke, but you still get the idea that she is not content with the way she looks:

Haha, jeg kom nettopp på en vits: "De sier at Zalo fjerner både fett og

Haha, I just thought of a joke: "They say Zalo¹⁸ removes both fat¹⁹ and germs, but

¹⁸ Dishwashing liquid

¹⁹ Fat also means grease in Norwegian

bakterier, men her sitter jeg da, like feit og forkjøla". (Silje's blog)

here I am, just as fat and still with a cold".

In the same post she also says she looks like a troll because she has the flu.

Går rundt å nyser konstant, og ser ut som et.. troll. (Silje's blog)

Walk around sneezing constantly and look like a.. troll.

Veslemøy has posted an entry where she tells her readers that she has taken some time to take care of her looks:

Jeg tok nettopp en dusj med peeling, rens, såpe, ansiktsmaske og bodylotion (...). Det er ikke det at jeg er så utrolig besatt av å se bra ut. Jeg kan uten problemer gå uten sminke, men når man først har puttet på seg maskara en gang så er det litt vanskelig å føle seg fin uten, og om man ikke føler seg fin er det vanskelig å formidle til andre at man er komfortabel med seg selv. (Veslemøy's blog)

I just took a shower with a peeling, rinsing, soap, facial mask, and body lotion (...). It is not that I'm so concerned about looking good. I can easily go out with makeup, but when one has put on mascara for the first time I get a bit difficult to feel pretty without, and if one doesn't feel pretty it gets difficult to convey to others that you are comfortable with yourself.

Then she posts the picture with the earlier mentioned comment about not wearing makeup. In other words, although she says she does not feel comfortable without wearing makeup she still posts a picture where she is makeup free. This means, she posts a picture where she is in fact not comfortable with the way she looks. She says that she is not too concerned with her appearance and gives off the impression that she does not want to be that kind of person. Maybe she wants to prove this by posting a makeup free picture.

Having a healthy lifestyle seems to be important to several of the bloggers. They often write about what they eat and having exercised. During January Silje writes about exercising 6 times. Considering the fact that these posts are evenly divided throughout January, Silje gives the impression that she exercises on a regular basis.

When talking about his eating habits during the holidays Eirik writes the following:

Herregud, hva er det julen egentlig gjør med oss? Vi spiser bare usunn mat og sitter limt foran tven. Er det mulig å leve så lowlife som meg nå? Og i tillegg merkes det på huden og vekta! Jeg kunne like så godt levd på grandiosa resten av livet. Jeg føler meg som en jævla usunn blubbe! Eller, vent! Jeg har jo alltid to fingre og et dolokk som kan komme til nytte... Uansett, FML²⁰ (Eirik's blog)

Oh, my God! What's actually Christmas doing to us? All we do is eat unhealthy food while watching TV. Is it possible to live as lowlife as I am right now? And it's even noticeable on my skin and weight. I might as well live off frozen pizza the rest of my life. I feel like a fucking unhealthy fat-ass. Or, hold on. I do have two fingers and a toilet seat which could come in handy. Whatever, FML

In other words, Eirik compares eating unhealthy food to being "lowlife". It is evident that he does not like the fact that he has gained weight during Christmas. He even goes as far as saying he could throw up what he has eaten, which is a strong statement.

Some of Veslemøy's posts indicate that she thinks she should be more sporty and healthy than she actually is. When talking about her dream apartment and how it should look like, she writes the following:

Og en tredemølle for å late som at jeg er sporty. (Veslemøy's blog)

And a treadmill to pretend I'm sporty.

In other words, she wants to seem sporty, although she is not. In the same post she also says that she wishes eating cake all the time was not unhealthy.

Hobbies and interests are another aspect of a person's lifestyle. We often get to hear about this on the blog. For example Andreas plays piano and tennis, Eirik plays handball and

²⁰ Fuck My Life

Veslemøy sings in a choir. The three of them also express their interest in music in general and several times they post audio clips of songs they like. Andreas even says that he would die without music:

Hadde det ikke vært for musikk, hadde
jeg vært død for mange år siden. Seriøst.
(Andreas' blog)

If hadn't been for music I'd be dead
many years ago. Seriously.

Eirik makes a similar statement:

Uten musikk ville ikke verden gått rundt.
Ikke for meg i alle fall. (Eirik's blog)

Without music the world wouldn't go
around. Not for me anyway.

In other words, music is clearly important to both of them. Taking pictures is also something several of the bloggers like to do. Silje has started on a photo project where she is to take pictures of 100 different themes, while Andreas participates in a photo seminar. Fashion is also an interest several of the bloggers share.

5.4.2 Trajectory of the Self

The trajectory of the self is both the path which you have left behind and the anticipated future path. (Giddens 1991). Stories told on the blogs are often stories from the past. Sometimes they tell the reader what they did yesterday, other times they tell stories from years back in time. They also share their plans for the future. In other words, the blog emerges as a trajectory where the authors structure their narratives from the past and into the future.

One interesting feature of a blog is the fact that it is sorted in a reversed chronological order. This means, the latest post is at the top of the page and then older posts follow. In other

words, if you read a blog from the top to bottom you go back in time. However, when writing a blog it is done chronologically, as you post the entries day by day. If followed on a regular basis, the readers will also read the blog chronologically. Still, both the authors of the blogs and the readers can go back in time and see how the narrative has evolved.

Often, the bloggers tell the readers about upcoming events and later write about how they turned out. For example Silje writes about getting ready for a prom at school, and then later we hear about how she experienced the prom. On the 7th of January she writes:

Egentlig har jeg utrolig dårlig tid, fordi jeg skal på nyttårsball idag. Jeg skal være nede hos venninna mi klokken seks, og før det må jeg rekke å krølle middagen, spise håret, pusse kjolen og finne tennene. Eller noe i den duren (Silje's blog)

Actually I haven't got a lot of time, because I'm going to a new year's ball today. I have to be at my friend's house at six o'clock, and before that I need to curl dinner, eat my hair, brush my dress and find my teeth. Or something like that.

Then, on the 10th of January she writes:

(...) nyttårsballet var kjempekjekt, (Silje's blog)

(...)the new year's ball was really fun,

An example of going years back in time, we find in Andreas's blog. Here he tells a little anecdote about his family.

Haha, ja nå skal du høre! For et par år siden, fikk vi ikke gått rundt juletreet og sunget på julaften, og det hadde pappa så utrolig lyst til å gjøre. Så vi bestemte at vi skulle gjøre det dagen etter.. Men

Haha, listen to this! A couple of years ago, we didn't get to walk around the Christmas tree and sing on Christmas eve, and dad really wanted to do this. So we decided to do it the next day.. But

neida, da fikk vi ikke tid! Og sånn
forsatte det i uker. Plutselig var det
slutten av februar og vi hadde fortsatt
juletreet i huset! Haha, etter det kastet
vi treet og det ble ikke noe dansing rundt
det. (Andreas' blog)

no, we didn't get the time! And like that
it continued for weeks. Suddenly, it was
the end of February and we still had the
Christmas tree in the house! Haha, after
that we threw out the tree and there
was no dancing around it.

Silje does the same when she tells the readers about being afraid of the dentist when she was a child:

Da jeg var liten, kunne jeg ikke fordra
tannlegen. Tannlegen var noe av det
verste jeg visste, og jeg grudde meg flere
dager i forveien. Tror faktisk jeg burte
meg inn under diverse senger og stoler
også noen ganger også, hadde ihvertfall
ikke kommet som et sjokk. Uansett, jeg
byttet tannlege da jeg var rundt ti år, og
da fikk jeg verdens kuleste tannlege.
Gruer meg ikke en plass når jeg skal til
tannlegen lengre, og trenger ikke
trøstepremie etterpå engang. Hei,
fremskritt! :D (Silje's blog)

When I was little, I couldn't endure the
dentist. The dentist was one of my least
favourite things, and I was anxious days
in advance. Think I actually hid under
different beds and chairs sometimes
also, hadn't surprised me much anyhow.
Anyway, I changed dentist when I was
about ten, and then I got the world's
coolest dentist. I'm not the least anxious
when going to the dentist anymore, and
don't even need a consolation price
afterwards. Hey, progress! :D

The trajectory of the self also works as a personal calendar. Giddens states the following:
“Personal calendars are timing devices for significant events within the life of the individual,
inserting such events within a personalised chronology”. (Giddens 1991:85). The bloggers

often use the personal calendar when writing. For example Veslemøy writes the following in a post:

Vi har vært venner siden før
barneskolestadiet (Veslemøy's blog)

We've been since before primary school.

5.4.3 Fateful Moments and Existential Questions

Some stories of a person's narrative are more significant than others. Often, these stories are related to what Giddens calls fateful moments. "Fateful moments are times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were at a crossroad in his existence; or where a person learns of information with fateful consequences." (Giddens 1991:113). When fateful moments occur, existential questioning often follows. Giddens claims that in our everyday life we all create a protective cocoon, which renders us capable of keeping the existential questions at a comfortable distance. However, at fateful moments the protective cocoon is often broken, or at least threatened. Therefore, we start asking questions about our existence. (Giddens 1991). Like mentioned earlier, the way Veslemøy refers to her parents' divorce, makes it seem that this was a fateful moment in her life. Eirik has two posts which could indicate that he had his protective cocoon broken by a fateful moment. In one of the posts, which has been mentioned earlier in the analysis, something has happened, and Eirik says everything has changed and now everything feels wrong. In the other post, he is dealing with the existential issue of emptiness.

Tomhetsfølelse
Selv om ingenting egentlig mangler,
virker det som om alt mangler. Hvis dere

Feeling of emptiness
Even though nothing is lacking, it seems

skjønner?

Akkurat nå har jeg en skikkelig tom følelse. En rar, tom følelse. Jeg går rundt uten mål og mening, og venter på at noe skal skje. Jeg aner ikke hvorfor, men jeg er bare inne i en periode. En veldig tom og random periode. Det er som om alt bare faller i fra hverandre og jeg er det eneste mennesket på planeten. Jeg har litt vanskelig for å uttrykke meg og følelsene mine, og det er vel grunnen til at dette er tiende gang jeg starter på dette innlegget. Jeg har overhodet ingen grunn til å hate livet, jeg bare føler meg så tom. Dette kommer også til å gå utover bloggen, tro meg. Jeg aner liksom ikke hva jeg skal skrive og blogge om.

Tips anyone?

Men alt ordner seg vel til slutt, eller hva?
(Eirik's blog)

everything is lacking. If you understand?

Right not I feel really empty. A strange, empty feeling. I go about without goal or purpose, and waiting for something to happen. I don't know why, but I'm just in a phase. En very empty and random phase. It's as if everything is just falling apart and I'm the only human being on the planet. I have a hard time expressing myself and my feelings, and that's probably why I'm starting this post for the tenth time. I have no reason what so ever to hate life, I just feels so empty. This will affect the blog as well, believe me. I just don't know what to write and blog about. Tips anyone?

But everything will work out in the end, right?



Although he seems rather down, he has a positive ending to the post and has added a picture where he looks happy. Is this perhaps a way of making the post more appropriate for the blog? If all of the post negative it might be more intimidating to post it, than if he seems a bit positive as well. After all, these kinds of moments are not very common to share on a blog. Though, he could also actually be positive.

5.4.4 Internal Referentiality

Internal referentiality is the framework of the reflexive project of the self. It is within this framework we choose. Internal referentiality is “the creation of a personal belief system by means of which the individual acknowledges that ‘his first loyalty is to himself’. The key reference points are set ‘from the inside’ in terms of how the individual constructs/reconstructs his life history.” (Giddens 1991:80). In other words, the different choices need to relate to each other.

Sometimes it is possible to see how the bloggers’ choices relate to each other. Eirik gets asked why he has chosen to blog and answers the following way:

Fordi jeg har fritidsproblemer og vil få ut
alle mine tanker som ellers blir i hodet.
Og selvfølgelig for å forbedre
skriveferdighetene. (Eirik’s blog)

Because I have lots of spare time and
want to get all my thoughts out of my
head which will otherwise remain there.
And obviously to improve my writing
skills.

Then he gets asked what kind of occupation he would like to have. To which he answers:

Jeg har lyst å bli journalist eller fotograf.
Helst begge deler! (Eirik’s blog)

I would like to become a journalist or a
photographer. Preferably both!

So, Eirik is blogging because he wants to improve his writing. It is likely to think that getting better at writing also has something to do with him wanting to become a journalist. Another example of internal referentiality we see on the blogs is when Veslemøy several times explicitly says she is politically active and then she writes about political topics. Furthermore, she also writes that she is walking, instead of driving, because her family is concerned about the environment.

Internal referentiality is also a persons' belief system. Several times the bloggers express their beliefs. For example, Eirik expresses his anti-fur opinion. Here is an excerpt from the post:

De stakkars, små uskyldige dyrene blir fanget og satt i små bur. Herregud, bare for at de har pels, så skal de mishandles? Hvor er logikken, folkens? Medfølelsen? ... Og mens dyrene er halvdøde, skjærer folkene uten hjerte, av pelsen. Dyrene blir slått, sparket og mishandlet, før pelsen skjæres av. Sykt. Det burde ikke vært lov i 2010. Også brukes dette på jakker, luer, skjerf osv. Bare for at noen skal føle seg eksklusive. (Eirik's blog)

Those poor, small innocent animals are trapped and then put in small cages. Oh my god, just because they have fur, they are to be mistreated? Where is the logic, people? The compassion? ... And while the animals are half dead, those heartless people, cut off the fur. The animals are hit, kicked and mistreated, before the fur is cut off. Sick. It shouldn't be legal in 2010. And then it's used on jackets, hats, scarves and so on. Just for someone to feel luxurious.

Veslemøy expresses that because she is a feminist, she is very concerned about equality. She writes the following:

Det er mye urettferdighet i verden, og jeg fokuserer som feminist mye på likestilling mellom både kvinner og menn og heterofile, bifile og homofile. Jeg mener at de fleste verdensreligionene ødelegger ganske mye der, og om alle i verden skulle tilhørt en av disse religionene, hadde verden vært enda

There's a lot of injustice in the world, and as a feminist I focus a lot on equality between woman and man and heterosexual, bisexuals and homosexuals. I think that most world religions ruin a lot there, and if everyone in the world would belong to one of these religions, the world would have

mer på trynet enn det den er i dag. Jeg mener at Norge burde være religionsnøytralt, det hadde vært så mye mindre ekskluderende. (Veslemøy's blog)

been even more messed up than it is today. I think that Norway should be religiously neutral, that would have been so much less excluding.

She continues the posts by writing about her complete disregard for religion.

5.4.5 Summary

The blogs serve as a narrative of the self for all the authors. They sort out different stories from their everyday life which they then post on the blog. Most common is writing about what they have done the same day they write the post. School is an important part of their narrative and is often mentioned on the blog. They seldom say anything positive about school. Usually, they complain about the load of homework and how much time school is taking up. There are some exceptions, though. Friends are also an important part of their narrative. They often mention what they do with their friends and sometimes they also express their feelings towards them. Because of the amount of posts mentioning friends they become a main ingredient of the blog posts. As all of the bloggers still live at home, they are surrounded by their family every day. Both of the girls mention their family quite often. Eirik, in contrast, does not say anything about his family. In many ways a blog is a presentation of a person's lifestyle. We often get to hear about their appearance, what they eat, how they spend their time and about hobbies and interests. Negative comments about their own appearance appear very often on the blog. Especially, when the bloggers comment on a picture of themselves. Pictures of themselves appear frequently and give the readers both knowledge of the authors' appearance as well as choice of clothing. The bloggers seem concerned about having a healthy lifestyle. They often write about having exercised and about what they eat. The blog posts also usually tell stories from the past.

Sometimes they tell about what they did yesterday, other times they tell stories about what happened years ago. They also tell their readers about future plans. In other words, the blog emerges as a trajectory. The bloggers often use the personal calendar when writing. When it comes to fateful moments Eirik is the only blogger who has blog posts which can be interpreted as dealing with this issue. He has two posts where it seem as if he has gotten the protective cocoon broken by a fateful moment, which leads to him dealing with existential questions. Sometimes it is possible to see how the bloggers' choices relate to each other. For example Veslemøy writes that she is politically active and, therefore, she writes about political topics on her blog. The bloggers also express their beliefs on the blogs.

6.0 Discussion

6.1 How Do the Blogs Relate to Couldry's Theory about Digital storytelling?

In digital storytelling Couldry says there is a pressure to make a visual presentation out of the narrative, to limit the length of the narrative, towards standardization and to take account of the possibility that any narrative when posted online may have unintended and undesired audiences. (Couldry 2009:382). In other words, in the world of digital storytelling there are several types of pressures which affect what can be told and how it can be told. All of the blogs are affected by the different pressures. All of them do indeed make a visual presentation of their narratives. Their blogs are also very similar when it comes to design and layout, both when it comes to the look of the entire blog and the way they design a blog post. The bloggers seems to be affected to some degree by the pressure to limit their stories. Very often the posts consist of a summary of their day and a picture. These kinds of posts fit what seems to be the blog template, both in terms of the length of narrative and the visualization of narrative, which is how we see the pressure towards standardization in

the world of blogging. These kinds of posts, the daily summaries, which really do not say much more than what the blogger has done, are not necessarily very interesting. This might explain the need for a picture. I doubt the fact that a blog which only had posts consisting of a summary of the day and no picture would get many readers. However, limiting the length of narrative is not always easy, sometimes the bloggers have a lot on their minds. Although the average post has a medium amount of text the bloggers sometimes write longer posts as well. Longer posts usually occur when they express strong opinions or share their thoughts and feelings. In other words, it seems that getting to express themselves is of more importance to the bloggers, than it is to fit the standard template. In my opinion the posts which are the most engaging are in fact the long posts. However, if the fact that most of the bloggers post a new entry everyday is taken into consideration, it could be problematic to have these long posts every day. Both because, their readers, if not looking in on the blog daily, might get too much reading to catch up, and off course, long posts also take longer time to write.

It seems as though the authors both do and do not take the fact that their blogs can have unintended and undesired audiences into consideration. It is evident that they sometimes leave out bits of their narratives. There are also some things that one would expect to be found in teenagers' blogs, which are not present. For example, none of the authors mentions love or being in love. Not only do the bloggers have to consider the fact that their blogs can have unintended and undesired audience when posting a story. They also have to take into consideration that the blogs can be used as an archive in years to come. Couldry says: "If digital storytellers assume that their public narratives will be an archive that can be used against them in years to come, they may adjust the stories they tell online." (Couldry 2009:382). We do know that the authors at times are holding back certain information when blogging. In other words, they are in fact adjusting their stories to fit the blog medium, which is open for anyone to read. If the reason for holding back parts of their narrative is to protect

themselves from an unintended and undesired audience or because they are afraid their stories might be used against them, we do not know. It could be both. In other words, the stories told on the blogs are only part of a person's narrative, the part which is appropriate for the public sphere. However, what is considered appropriate is up to the author to decide. Even though we see evidence of the bloggers protecting their privacy, they also share things which may be used against them. For example, posting that you have cheated on test might get consequences if read by the wrong reader.

6.2 How Are The Blogs Affected by the Fact That They Are Mediated Communication?

Mediated communication makes it possible to interact in a whole new way. Hjarvard says: "Communication, once bound to the physical meeting of individuals, face-to-face, has been succeeded by mediated communication, where the relationship between sender and receiver is altered in decisive respects." (Hjarvard 2008:109). Like Couldry, Hjarvard is also concerned about the fact that the sender has very little control of the way his message is received and interpreted and in which way the receiver makes use of it. (Hjarvard 2008). When it comes to interpreting a message in face-to-face communication intonation and body language are very important elements. On a blog the written language is used, which is easier to misinterpret than the oral language as you can use neither body language nor intonation to interpret the message. Although the blogs are written, the language often has an oral character, as if the author is speaking to the readers. The reason the language appears oral is because of the large amount of slang and onomatopoeias. The onomatopoeias help to express feelings and are a clue to which way the message should be interpreted. This is especially important when the bloggers are joking or being ironic. Sometimes, to be sure they are not being misinterpreted, the authors simply say that they

are in fact not being serious. As you cannot see the expression of the author when writing a post, emoticons are used as a way of expressing the way he or she feels. Emoticons are therefore also helpful when interpreting the text. They also enhance what the author is saying.

Media “extend human communication abilities in both time and space” (Schulz 2004 in Hjarvard 2008:109). The fact that the blogs can be read wherever and whenever, as long as you have a computer and internet connection, is typical for mediated communication and what Giddens calls the ‘Separation of time and space’. Neither the author nor the reader need to be concerned about time or space. This means that a new entry can be posted whenever it suits the author and the post can be read minutes or days later by someone living next door or on another continent.

Media also makes it possible to share the same experience at different times and places, for example, through television and radio. In other words, we can share many of the same experiences even though we might live miles apart. Giddens calls this phenomenon a ‘realm of mediated experience’. We see the bloggers refer to these mediated experiences. They even make it possible for their own readers to share a mediated experience through reading the blog. They also contribute to the readers mediated experiences by posting music videos and audio clips on their blogs.

Mediated communication makes it “possible to establish closer contact with less of a personal investment” (Hjarvard 2008:123). Reading a blog is an easy way of keeping updated on a person’s life as blogs usually revolve around the everyday life of the author. If the intended audience of the blog is family and friends, the blogger can tell everyone about the same thing at the same time, in other words, a very efficient way of communicating.

When communicating through a media you have more control over the image you display, than you have with face-to-face communication. Hjarvard says the following: "It is in this regard that media can help us manage the impressions we project to the world around us and, generally speaking, the narrower the channel of communication a medium offers, the easier it is to manage the communication." (Hjarvard 2008:124). When writing a blog you decide which part of yourself you want to share. If you want to, you can highlight the parts of yourself which you like the most and leave out the parts you do not like. In this regard blogs are a place where it is possible to present the perfect version of yourself. It is difficult to say how consciously the bloggers decide which parts of themselves they want to share with the readers. Often they say things about themselves that do not contribute to a perfect picture. However, to present an image of a perfect person might not be their objective. Perhaps an honest picture is what they like to share. Considering the fact that the bloggers also share negative things about themselves, this seems to be the case. It seems that they want the blog to reflect several aspects of who they are. Still, as mentioned earlier, sometimes they have a need to protect their privacy. It seems to me that they want the blog to mirror their everyday life as well as their thoughts and opinions, but not at the cost of entering what they consider to be their private sphere. Although the bloggers bring their readers along in many different aspects of their life, they still do have a tendency to write more about some parts than others. These seem to be the parts which are most important for the authors that the readers know about.

6.3 How Do Constructing a Blog Identity Relate to Giddens' Theory About Self-Identity and the Reflexive Project of the Self?

Giddens defines self-identity in the following words: "The self as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography." (Giddens 1991:53). When looking at our

biography we can determine whether or not the choices we have made have had the impact on our lives which we were hoping for. This means, the reflexive project of the self is organized through the narrative of the self. In other words, our biography or narrative of the self helps us to understand who we are, and how we have become who we are. The blogs serve as a narrative of the self for all the authors. They sort out different stories from their everyday life which they post on the blog. The actual sorting out we know nothing about, or said differently, we do not know what they have chosen not to post on their blogs. Although the most common story is a summary of their day, they do not include every detail of that day. In other words, even though they say today I have done this and that, they sort out which parts they include in the summary. What they do choose to post on the blog becomes an important element in understanding who the blog-I is. As we do not know the authors, apart from what we have learnt about them on the blog, the selection of stories which they sort into the ongoing story on the blog, becomes the blog-I. Parts of their narrative becomes important because it is a big part of their life whether they like it or not. Like school, for example, which is what the bloggers write about the most if you see the four blogs as a whole. Because they are at a time in life where school takes up much of their time their narrative reflects this. It is likely to believe that blogs which have the same character as those I have analyzed will reflect main ingredients of a person's everyday life as well. Nevertheless, it is still a choice to write about school and bring this part of their life onto the blog. For example, one of the bloggers chooses not to write about his family, even though his family is most likely a big part of his everyday life because he lives at home.

When the bloggers sort out stories, many of those included on the blog consider their lifestyle. What you eat, what you wear, who you spend your time with, hobbies and interests is typical blog material, and we have seen that they are typical topics in the blogs I have analyzed. Lifestyle is "... a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian need, but because they give

material form to a particular narrative of self-identity.” (Giddens 1991:81). Your lifestyle is the image you display, or in Giddens words, the material form of the narrative of self-identity. Therefore, it is not strange that presenting your lifestyle becomes a main ingredient in the blogs. When presenting your lifestyle you are in fact presenting yourself. Presenting your lifestyle is a very concrete way of saying who you are.

Another “story” which is often repeated on the blogs is the story of their appearance, which is also part of a lifestyle. A person’s appearance gives clues to interpret their action. Because it is such an important ingredient in displaying who you are, it becomes a main aspect of the reflexive project of the self. Thus, the aspect of the body is not a simple notion. Giddens says: “In conditions of high modernity, the body is actually far less ‘docile’ than ever before in relation to the self, since the two become intimately coordinated within the reflexive project of self-identity.” (Giddens 1991:218). Several of the bloggers comment on their appearance very often. Because they do this so frequently it becomes a significant part of the narrative of the blogs. Appearance therefore seems important to the authors, which is not strange considering what Giddens says about how the body is intimately coordinated with the self. Since the comments to a large extent are negative, the image the bloggers display of themselves is that they are not satisfied with their looks.

Internal referentiality is the self-made framework of the reflexive project of self, which the different stories need to fit into. Internal referentiality is “the creation of a personal belief system by means of which the individual acknowledges that ‘his first loyalty is to himself’”. The key reference points are set ‘from the inside’ in terms of how the individual constructs/reconstructs his life history.” (Giddens 1991:80). Several times the bloggers share their beliefs on the blog which is part of the internal referentiality. When they share their beliefs they explicitly say what they believe in. In other words, an important component in understanding who the blog-I is.

Some stories influence the self-identity more than others. Stories of fateful moments are often a crucial part of the narrative of the self. A result of experiencing a fateful moment is often having the protective cocoon broken. When this happens, existential questioning often follows. "Fateful moments are times when events come together in such a way that an individual stands, as it were at a crossroad in his existence; or where a person learns of information with fateful consequences." (Giddens 1991:113). As fateful moments often are experienced as crossroads, and therefore a choice between different paths must be taken, the narrative of the self often takes a new turn at fateful moments. Stories of fateful moments are not common in the blogs, but they are present in two of them. In Veslemøy's blog an earlier fateful moment is referred to and in Eirik's blog what seems to be a fateful moment is shared with the readers. In other words, he includes the fateful moment and the existential questioning it imposes in the blog-I. However, we do not get to know what has happened, he only shares his feelings about what seems to be a fateful moment.

6.4 Concluding Thoughts - How Do Young Teenagers Construct a Self-Identity in the Blog Format?

In order to answer my main thesis question, the relationship between the answers of the three research questions needs to be explored. It is the way they interrelate which will give the answer to the main thesis question.

It is through the stories on the blog the identity is constructed. The authors must sort out which stories they want to post. Several aspects affect this sorting out process. Because there is a pressure towards standardization and a pressure to limit the narrative on the blogs, this makes the posts, or the stories, often look alike. The stories which are most often told are short summaries of the authors' days. The protection of their privacy also limits what they can or want to tell. They share the part of their narrative which they think is

appropriate for the public sphere. If one of the reasons for blogging is keeping friends and family updated this affects which stories they sort into the blog narrative. It also seems that they sort out some stories which the readers can relate to. These are the stories of mediated experience. The fact that their stories can be misinterpreted probably also affects the process of which stories they choose.

In other words, when stories are posted on the blogs several aspects have been taken into consideration. The stories which get posted portray the image of the author. Even though the most common stories are short summaries of the bloggers' day, they very often still tell quite a lot about the lifestyle of the blogger. Presenting different aspects of your lifestyle is a concrete way of telling who you are, as it is the narrative of the self in material form. One important part of the lifestyle which the authors often write about is their appearance.

One of the main advantages in displaying an identity online is the fact that it is easier to portray the image you want through mediated communication than in face-to-face interaction. When constructing an identity in the blog format the authors can filter out parts of his or her narrative and highlight others. This means, that the authors have the possibility to present a perfect version of themselves, if that is what they want. However, this does not seem to be the case. In the blogs we do not see a perfect picture of the authors. It seems that they sort out stories which tell about both positive and negative parts of themselves. Because of this, the image displayed seems honest. Still, as we do not know which stories they do filter out, the blog-I might be what they consider a better version of themselves.

Although the stories most often are affected by the aspects mentioned above, the bloggers sometimes include stories which do not take them into consideration. They are for example too long or do not take the question of privacy and unintended and undesired audience into consideration. It seems that it is more important for the authors to express their thoughts and feelings when they have a need for it, than it is to fit into the standard blog template or

protect their privacy. We have seen this, for example, when the bloggers express their beliefs. The stories of their beliefs becomes an important part of the blog-I, because it so clearly shows us what they believe in, which is an important part of a person's identity.

We have seen that when a fateful moment is shared on a blog, which is not common, the reader gets invited into the thoughts and existential questions which follow. In other words, a very private part of the self. What actually has happened at that fateful moment, is kept private. What is shared with the readers are the thoughts and feelings about the fateful moment. In other words, although the author shares a story which is a significant part of the narrative and of very private character, a consciousness of not revealing too much to an unknown audience is present.

Considering everything which affects which parts of your narrative you can post on the blog it is evident that the narrative on the blog is never the whole story. They construct an identity by first and foremost telling the stories of their lifestyle, which is a very concrete way of telling who they are. Sometimes, however, stories which share their thoughts and ideas are posted, which gives a more nuanced picture the "blog-I".

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Eirik's blog: *eirik jørgensen* <http://eirikss.blogg.no/>

Silje's blog: *siljestene.blog.no* <http://siljestene.blogg.no/>

Veslemøy's blog: *SETT HERFRA - en fjortis' bekjennelser (From this point of view - Confessions of a teenybopper*²¹) <http://settherfra.blogspot.com/>

²¹ My translation