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An integrated literature review investigating how significant elements of drama therapy, namely role method and narradrama, can support the congruent identity formation of teenagers influenced by contemporary social media

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AN INTEGRATED LITERATURE REVIEW INVESTIGATING HOW SIGNIFICANT ELEMENTS OF DRAMA THERAPY, NAMELY ROLE METHOD AND NARRADRAMA, CAN SUPPORT THE CONGRUENT IDENTITY FORMATION OF TEENAGERS INFLUENCED BY CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MEDIA

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TOPIC: An integrated literature review investigating how significant elements of Drama Therapy, namely Role Method and Narradrama, can support the congruent identity formation of teenagers influenced by contemporary social media.

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Abstract

Social media, which is widely used by teenagers world-wide, can have both a positive and/or negative impact on their developing self-identities. Extensive research has been conducted on the impact of social media on the mental health of teenagers but has failed to address the impact on their developing identities. This research aims to fill that gap by ascertaining how Drama Therapy informed Role Method and Narradrama can support the congruent identity formation of teenagers impacted by social media usage. It also aims to identify tools for drama therapists to use when addressing these issues. An integrative literature review was conducted in which diverse perspectives from existing literature were reviewed, critiqued, and integrated. Grounded theory was then applied to identify and categorise themes that emerged from the literature. There was strong evidence to support the use of Narradrama to help teenagers reauthor their problem-saturated stories and strengthen their congruent identity formation. Role Method was also shown to greatly benefit congruent identity formation through the expansion of an individual's role repertoire. The results demonstrated that both Narradrama and Role Method provide appropriate tools for drama therapists to use to address the issue of congruent identity formation and are well placed to support the congruent identity development of teenagers who have been impacted by social media usage.

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Glossary

Identity: There are many different perspectives and ways to understand the concept of "identity". According to the psychodynamic approach, an individual's sense of identity is shaped by their repertoire of roles (Meldrum, 1994). According to Jones, social contact shapes the concept of the self, and an individual's identity is viewed as being built through the roles they play in diverse circumstances (Jones, 1996). Newcomb and Bentler (1989) also highlight the significance of social elements in relation to identity (Newcomb and Bentler, 1989). Identity is a changeable, internal entity that integrates self-perceptions, self-knowledge, and self-experience. These aspects of identity are formed within a cultural and relational context and inform an individual's story (Jones, 2007). For the purposes of this paper, identity will be understood as the stories an individual tells themselves and the consequent roles they play.

Teenager: When attempting to determine the exact ages that constitute the teenage years, there seems to be little consensus. The term 'teenager' originated after WW2 to denote a group of young people between the ages of 14 to 18. It was used for marketing purposes as this group was recognised as having their own rights, rituals and demands (Davies and Eynon, 2013). The World Health Organization uses the category of "young people" to mean those from 10 to 24 years old, and the term adolescence to mean those from 10 to 19 years old (Britannica, 2024). The United Nations categorises the group as "youth", meaning 15- to 24-year-olds. The members of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine, which includes 10 different countries, use the terms 'adolescent', 'youth', and 'young people' interchangeably to mean those from 15 to 24 years old (Walker-Harding *et al.*, 2017). Then there are those that say that the terms adolescence and teenage years are interchangeable and refer to ages of 13 to 19 years old (Tidy, 2023). The Government of Canada refers to a

teenager as an individual between the ages of 13 and 17 years old (Government of Canada, 2002), whilst the America Academy for Paediatrics refers to teens as those between 12 and 18 years old (American Academy of Paediatrics, no date). For the purposes of this research paper, we will refer to teenagers and adolescents interchangeably, and will use the Cambridge Dictionary definition of an individual between 13 and 19 years old (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

Social media: When researching the definition of social media, there is a wide variety of definitions that one encounters. For the purposes of this research paper, I have decided to use the definition given by Carr and Hayes (2015) in their paper on defining social media. They state that social media are

> "internet-based, disentrained, persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content"
>
> (Carr and Hayes, 2015:7)

Narradrama: Narradrama incorporates both narrative therapy and Drama Therapy. It uses a combination of verbal expression, creative expression (such as art, movement, puppets, and masks) and experiential activities (Dunne, 1997)

Role Method: Role Method is the application of role theory in Drama Therapy

Research Title

An integrated literature review investigating how significant elements of Drama Therapy, namely Role Method and Narradrama, can support the congruent identity formation of teenagers influenced by contemporary social media.

Key Words: social media, story, role, teenager, identity

1. Introduction

I am a student drama therapist, as well as a mother of two teenage children. My personal experience with my teenagers, their friends, and the teenagers that I saw at my placement facility, led me to question how significant an impact social media, and the desire to portray a perfect life, has on the formation of a teenager's identity. It is, of course, part of growing up that a child explores roles that they wish to integrate into their repertoire as they emerge into adolescence and adulthood. Such an exploration of role possibilities is the natural progression towards the formation of identity (Mcleod, 2023). I was interested in finding out if the 'socially acceptable roles' that teenagers play for social media, impact their idea of who they are, and if so, what role Drama Therapy can play in guiding teenagers towards developing a more congruent self-identity.

A study conducted in 2015, found that teenagers present themselves on social media in ways that appear to be driven by a need to make a good impression on others (Herring and Kapidzic, 2015). In previous decades, novelists would write bildungsroman books which focused on the psychological and moral growth of an individual from childhood to adulthood, where character growth was of great importance (Masterclass, 2021; Britannica, 2024). These books helped young readers with the challenges that they faced whilst growing up and forming their identities. In the social media age, teenagers curate, collate and construct their own identities online (Duffy, 2018). The feedback they receive from others results in an evolving and co-created identity. Due to the inexperience of teens, their limited self-regulatory capacity and their vulnerability to peer pressure, teens may create an online identity that is not true to who they really are (Duffy, 2018). Seeing as teenagers are still immature, they often become victims of cyberbullying, which may lead to insecurity (Kusuma, 2020). This insecurity has a multitude of effects on them, one of them being an insecurity about their online identity. It has been postulated that the line between the online

and offline self has blurred as the use of social media has become more commonplace, seemingly even leading to a fusion of the two identities (Hongladarom, 2011) and thus directly impacting the development of teen identity.

I recognise that I approached this research with certain assumptions in place. My hope was to establish how correct or incorrect these assumptions were during the course of the research. The assumptions I aimed to address in my research were that teenagers as young as 13 are already forming their identities and that they are heavily influenced by what they see on social media. I believe that the teenage years are a time of vulnerability and a time of wanting to fit in (Emunah, 2005). My concern was that social media can inaccurately portray others as having ‘perfect’ lives, which in turn may lead teenagers to begin to play roles that go against their natural disposition because of the socially acceptable, or expected, norms and ideas portrayed through social media. The Oxford Dictionary defines natural as “existing in nature; not made or caused by humans” and disposition as “the natural qualities of a person's character” (Oxford Learners Dictionary, 2023). Although our identities do not form in a vacuum, the constant barrage of social media on the lives of our teens, can cause their identities to be moulded (caused) by human intervention (Rasch and Bil-Jaruzelska, 2020), thereby overriding any natural tendencies and predispositions. Although the teenage years have always been a time of self-exploration and vulnerability, I believed that the introduction of social media and its ease of accessibility, had created an environment in which contemporary teenagers could benefit from assistance in navigating this period of their lives. My belief was that this assistance should be aimed at helping them formulate a more ‘true to themselves’/congruent identity.

A survey done in March 2022, reported in the New York Times, found that teenagers, between the ages of 13 and 18 years old, spend an average of eight and a half hours on social media every day. It also found that children as young as 8 were spending up to five

hours a day on social media. The report goes on to say that the primary concern with this, is that children as young as 8 cannot necessarily distinguish between what is real and what is fake, resulting in them absorbing misinformation and making the world ahead of them scary and confusing (Moyer, 2022). Misinformation has been found to impact an individual's cognitive, social, and affective processes (Ecker *et al.*, 2022). There is a shortage of research into the effects of misinformation on identity development, however, the evidence that is currently available suggests that the formation of cognitive schema and decision-making pathways are negatively impacted (Purnat, 2021). In his theory of cognitive development, Piaget introduced the concept of a schema as a category of knowledge and a category of acquiring knowledge (Piaget, 1976). Particularly relevant to identity formation, is the self-schema. The self-schema focuses on an individual's knowledge about themselves - including what they currently know about themselves as well as how they view their idealized or future self (Cherry, 2022). With this in mind, one can see how a negative cognitive schema can impact the development of an individual's identity in an unhealthy way.

There is evidence that a Drama Therapy intervention can combat the negative influences of social media on identity formation (Orkibi *et al.*, 2017). This can be achieved through group therapy and/or individual therapy. The reason that group therapy is beneficial, is that it can assist teenagers with feeling less alone in their pursuit of a congruent self-identity (Tartakovsky, 2021). Drama Therapy can assist in equipping teenagers with ways to change their negative self-talk, into self-acceptance for who they really are, and can help them realise their inner strength (Berghs *et al.*, 2022). It can further identify the ways in which a teenager's behaviours and thought processes are leading to an identity crisis and can help them focus on positive ways that they can take control of their own destiny. The ultimate goal would be for Drama Therapy to help teenagers formulate identities that reflect who they truly are internally.

I approached my research topic from a sociological point of view, with the purpose of understanding how human action and consciousness both shape, and are shaped by, surrounding cultural and social structures (University of Colorado, 2022). The sociological perspective looks at the broader social context of behaviour. It considers the internalization of external social influences (such education, gender, race, and personal experience) and how those internalized factors become integral to an individual's thinking and motivation (California State University, no date). My research attempts to understand and describe human nature, so I primarily used an Interpretive Research Paradigm.

This research was aimed at giving me a better understanding of the issues that teenagers are currently dealing with, particularly referencing the impact that social media, coupled with peer pressure to portray a perfect, politically, and socially correct life, has on the formation of their identities and their mental health. My hope is that this research will add to the existing body of knowledge regarding teenage identity formation in the contemporary world as well as to the Drama Therapy pool of knowledge by identifying tools for drama therapists to use when addressing these issues. I am hoping that my research will help breach the intergenerational gap and broaden our understanding of what the differences are between the generations, thus creating a bridge for different generations to accommodate one another. Drama therapists, or anyone for that matter in the health professional field, need to be aware of the influences, pressures and expectations teenagers are dealing with, so that we are better able to meet our teenage clients where they are, and properly help them navigate their lives. This research hopes to contribute to that awareness.

2. Background: An overview of theoretical considerations

Drama Therapy is an active, experiential form of creative therapy, combined with psychotherapy methods, that gives an individual new ways of expressing their inner and outer worlds (Rudlin, 2023). Social learning theory suggests that our behaviour is determined predominantly by what we learn, through observation and mirroring, as well as environmental influences (Bandura, 1971). This ties into the idea that the roles we play to fit into society, mould and shape our behaviour and our identity formation. Observation of others in terms of their behaviour, their perceived popularity, their success, and their dominance, both directly and indirectly impacts the manner in which most teenagers conduct themselves - specifically on social media (Rasch and Bil-Jaruzelska, 2020). Ehmke (2022) states that constant comparison is encouraged through social media, resulting in teenagers adjusting their social media posts so that they fit in and are socially acceptable.

2.1. Understanding what identity is

In order to establish what impact social media has on teenager identity formation, it is necessary to first establish what identity is and how it is formed. According to the handbook on adolescent psychology “identity refers to the sameness and continuity of the person's psychological functioning, interpersonal behaviour, and commitments to roles, values and beliefs” (Cote, 2009). It is the sense of being at one with yourself as you grow and develop, “and to an affinity between the individual and his or her social roles and community ties” (Hook, Watts, and Cockcroft, 2022). In his research on identity formation, (Waterman, 1984) describes identity as having a “clearly delineated self-definition comprised of those goals, values and beliefs to which a person is unequivocally committed.” Social identity includes race, ethnicity, gender, social class (or socioeconomic status), sexual orientation, abilities,

disabilities, and religious beliefs (Northwestern University, 2024). It also includes an individual's perception of themselves, based on the groups that they belong to (Mcleod, 2023). Social identity is an important aspect of identity and can be particularly important for a sense of wellbeing and belonging during the teenage years. In their paper on identity and the arts, Roy and Ladwig (2015) state that beliefs, attitudes, and a general sense of the self, particularly in relations to peers, are developing during adolescence. These form the basis of identity.

2.2. Identity Formation

It is also necessary to look at what is meant by the term identity formation. In their review on identity formation, Bosma and Kunnen (2001) state that it is an individual's analytical behaviour aimed at obtaining information about themselves and their environment, so that they are equipped to make important decisions regarding their life choices.

According to the psychosocial model proposed by Erik Erikson, the 5th stage of development is Identity vs Role Confusion (Mcleod, 2018). It is in this fifth stage that a child desires to fit into society and begins to learn the roles that they wish to play as they enter into adulthood. An adolescent will explore possibilities and start to form their own identity based on the conclusions that they draw from their explorations (Mcleod, 2018). Erikson further states that the development and maintenance of identity is dependent upon the recognition and support received from the social environment (Cote, 2009). An environment is supportive when it provides opportunities for an individual to successfully engage in a variety of roles. Exchanges with significant others as well as social institutions, may help maintain any positive steps that have been taken towards achieving a stable identity (Cote, 2009). In his paper regarding the sense of purpose in healthy identity formation, Bronk (2011) states that

adolescents are at a stage of development where they endeavour to cultivate a philosophy of life and to establish a rational sense of religious, political, moral, career, ethnic and sexual identity.

According to Adams and Marshall (1996), there are six main elements involved in the process of identity formation:

1. an understanding of where the ideas about certain values, goals and beliefs come from (called the source of identity elements);
2. how possible identity elements are evaluated and determined to be worthy;
3. how the task is recognised as being successfully completed;
4. a deep understanding of oneself;
5. a sense of personal choice;
6. an idea of both the past and the future.

Someone who has a strong sense of identity, will experience themselves as being consistent over time and in different contexts (Cote, 2009). Such an individual is further able to differentiate themself from other people, and other contexts in which they relate to others, and to internalize social roles as being part of themselves. According to Waterman (1984:334), incongruence in a teenager's identity becomes "an experience of existential dread", in which a person continues to perceive his or herself as "'nothingness'". When the ideal self does not align with the real self, a teenager will experience identity incongruence. Upon the resolution of identity formation, it is therefore beneficial for a teenager's identity to be congruent with their real self. In order for this to take place, teenagers need to be clear about the motivation behind their identity choices. They need to ensure that these choices have been made because of personal free will and not because of peer pressure. They also

need to make sure that the goals underlying their identity choices are internal goals, and not externally imposed. Both an individual's motivation and their goals are important for life satisfaction (Soenens and Vansteenkiste, 2011). The resolution of identity formation is only complete once all the roles that a teenager has been playing with, are integrated into a whole (Cote, 2009).

2.3. How Social Media ties into identify formation

Reddan (2015) did an investigation into the effect of social media on adolescent identity formation. He found that the type of feedback adolescents receive from their peers, whether good or bad, contributes to the development of their sense of identity (Reddan, 2015). Teenagers want to belong, and they want to fit into society (Mcleod, 2018). The shift from childhood into adulthood is extremely important. Children gradually become more independent as they look towards the future. This is a stage of development where they have to learn the roles that they will play as an adult (Mcleod, 2018).

Dr Steiner-Adair is a clinical psychologist and an expert on the impact of technology on development. She postulates that social media has led to children and teenagers creating not just online and offline identities, but rather many different identities. She goes on further to say that the more identities an individual has, and the more time they spend pretending to be someone they are not, the more difficult it is going to be for them to have a positive self-esteem (Ehmke, 2022). The teenage years are a very sensitive time for individuals. In his research on the effects of social media on teenage self-esteem, Muigai (2020) found that:

> Their sensitivity could be heightened by the fact that adolescence is a stage characterized by self-exploration of who one is and other changes such as physical appearance. Online feedback such as opinion on posted messages, physical appearance, and preconceived ideas is in most cases openly available to other people. Their awareness that other people are viewing their online content may have severe consequences for adolescents' self-esteem.
>
> (Muigai, 2020).

It is then easy to see why teenagers may begin to form opinions of themselves based on what other people comment on their social media posts (Muigai, 2020).

Modern day teenagers are members of a generation that are growing up during a time when digital technology is quickly expanding. Interactions on social media are now commonplace amongst teenagers. It is important to remember that teenagers are undergoing rapid changes in all aspects of their development, so the impact of social media needs to be monitored (Muigai, 2020). Social media can play both a positive and a negative role in the formation of a teenager's identity. Social media sites offer connection with peers, friendship, and common identities (Shapiro and Margolin, 2014) – elements which are essential for a teenager's psychosocial development. It has become common for teenagers to use social media as an easy way to explore various aspects of themselves as they delve into identity exploration (Reddan, 2015).

In his paper titled "An investigation into the impact of social networking platforms of adolescent identity formation", Reddan (2015) states that social media acts as a testing ground for identity and that users of social media often seek validation from their peers online. Teenagers may use social media sites to explore new aspects of identity that interest

them, which could prove more challenging for them to do when they are face-to-face with others. Social media sites make it possible for teenagers to connect with other, like-minded people. This may not be possible amongst their peer and friendship groups. This connection to others, could assist in a teenager's identity formation (Reddan, 2015).

Elsayed did a study in 2021, in which the aim was:

> to understand the social identity levels of adolescents and to analyse the negative effects of social media on their social identity… The results showed a variety of negative effects of social media on the social identity of adolescents in terms of achievement, - postponement, - closure and - dispersion.
>
> (Elsayed, 2021).

In his book on identity interaction and symbolic interaction, Burke (2020) tells us that a negative effect on dispersion may lead to uncertainty in identity. This, coupled with Elsayed's findings, show that not only can social media impact adolescents' mental health negatively, but it can also impact their identity formation negatively.

2.4. How Drama Therapy fits in

According to Phil Jones (2007), the nine core Drama Therapy principles are dramatic projection, drama therapeutic empathy and distancing, role playing and personification, interactive audience and witnessing, embodiment, playing, life-drama connection and transformation. It is important to explore a multifaceted Drama Therapy approach when exploring how Drama Therapy can support teenagers with the development of congruent identity formation in the contemporary digital world, using many of these core principles.

Role flexibility and expanding the role repertoire (range of roles) of an individual, is one of the major goals of Drama Therapy (Landy, 2009). In fact, the concept of role is pivotal in any drama therapeutic process (Landy *et al.*, 2003). Role theory postulates that a role is not merely a created social façade, but instead it is a true and tangible form of the self (Landy, 1993). This research aims to explore the way in which Robert Landy's Role Method can be utilised to help teenagers find their congruent identities. According to Landy (1991), our various roles may become entwined with one another. One of the aims of Role Method is to untangle these roles from each other so that integration may take place, allowing for the transformation of specific roles (Landy, 1991). "The healing potential of role is to be found as it positions the role-taker or role-player within the dramatic paradox of 'me' and 'not-me'" (Landy, 1991:7). Drama Therapy Role Method could allow an exploration of the roles a teenager has taken on, up until, and during, the process of their identity formation, and may allow for a re-integration of the roles that allow congruency in the teenager's identity and self.

Another aspect of Drama Therapy that may prove useful in identity work, is the use of masks. In their exploration of drama and masks, Roy and Dock (2014) spoke of the mask's ability to allow teenagers to use disguise to present themselves. This enables them to explore who they really are in relation to role, gender, religion, and politics, whilst maintaining a sense of distance and safety. An important aspect of mask work is that identities are not imposed upon the participants, but rather that they are allowed to be in control of who they become and which roles they explore.

The final aim of this research is to investigate how Narradrama could benefit this work. According to Pamela Dunne, the director of the Drama Therapy Institute in LA, Narradrama is likely to appeal to teenagers because it is based on relationships, and it avoids power imbalances (Dunne, 2009). Narradrama encompasses the following steps:

- Beginning to explore new descriptions of self-identity;
- Externalizing whatever problems arise from the exploration;
- Opening up possible extensions to self-identity;
- Externalizing new choices and pathways;
- Investigating personal agency;
- Re-storying problem saturated narratives;
- Creating closure (Dunne, 2006).

2.5. In Summary

The term identity refers to the consistency and continuity of an individual's "psychological functioning, interpersonal behaviour, and commitments to roles, values and beliefs" (Cote, 2009:267). Teenagers are undergoing rapid changes in all aspects of their development, including their identity formation. Social media can play both a positive and a negative role in this. Social media can lead to teenagers creating many different online and offline identities and playing many different online and offline roles. This may cause confusion and incongruence. These roles and identities need to be integrated into a whole in order to allow for identity formation to be complete. Social media also acts as a testing ground for identity, where teenagers are able to connect to like-minded people. This connection can aid identity formation. Drama Therapy is a creative therapy that can assist teenagers with new ways of expressing their inner and outer worlds (Rudlin, 2023), thus supporting them in their identity formation. Role Method could allow for an exploration and re-integration of roles towards

congruency in identity and self. Mask work could allow teenagers to explore who they really are in relation to role, gender, religion, and politics in a manner that does not create vulnerability. And lastly, Narradrama could allow for exploration of identity, externalisation, and re-storying of unhelpful narratives. This research aims to explore these Drama Therapy processes as a tool for supporting teenagers with healthy, congruent identity formation.

3. Statement of Intention

In this research, I explored how Drama Therapy can be used to identify incongruence in the internalised self-identity. There has been substantial research on the positive and negative impacts of social media on today's youth, but there is a gap in the research regarding the impact of social media on identity formation. This research attempts to not only bridge that gap, but also highlight how Drama Therapy can positively influence congruent identity formation. Identities are closely linked to storytelling and role association (Rasch and Bil-Jaruzelska, 2020). For this reason, the particular aspects of Drama Therapy that I focused my research on were Robert Landy's Role Method and Pamela Dunne's Narradrama.

My motivation for doing this research is that I have two children of my own who are currently in their teenage years. I have witnessed the change in both them and their friends as the years have progressed, and as they have been allowed more access to social media. Some of those changes have been positive, but some have altered the personalities of these youngsters to such an extent that mental illness has become prevalent. These obvious changes in the nature of the teenagers involved, as well as the suicide attempts of several of them, made me wonder how we, as a society, can protect these youngsters. When chatting to one of my daughter's friends, a teenage trans girl, one of the issues that she brought up in terms of teenage inauthenticity and role playing, was the popular concept of body positivity. She said that teenagers generally say that they agree with the concept, but in reality, they suffer from body dysmorphia or a general unhappiness with their own bodies. They also secretly body shame others. This is just one example of the incongruence I chose to research. It made me consider and research tangible ways that Drama Therapy can assist teenagers in identifying incongruence in themselves, in order to then equip them with the

confidence to reject those things that genuinely don't correlate with their beliefs. This research does not focus on identifying the inevitable inauthentic or false projected self that is human nature, but rather identifying the things that cause internal conflict and discomfort.

Social media is not going away, and it is unrealistic to expect children growing up in the digital age, to abstain from social media usage. Therefore, I was interested in finding a way that we can provide support to teenagers to help them navigate this difficult time of their lives. I remained cognisant of the fact that my personal experience with my teenagers and their friends, may have had an influence on my research in some way, and I read widely on the topic to avoid such influence. I was also very aware that my exposure had predominantly been to white middle to upper class socio-economic groups. I attempted in my research to incorporate all groups by including previous research conducted in other countries involving various socio-economic groups.

In my Master's Creative Research exam, I explored a few Drama Therapy exercises with my peers, with the intention of understanding this identity incongruence. A surprising finding that came about through the reflections and feedback I received, was that the participants felt little to no discomfort in expressing their projected selves, but all of them expressed extreme discomfort in embodying their internal self. The projected self is what an individual chooses to outwardly show to others in any given situation. This may contradict the deeper, more vulnerable internal self. The internal self contains a person's beliefs, values, motivations, and goals. The term internal self implies a level of authenticity, which is not associated with external identities and labels (*Yogapedia*, 2018). This was something I had not expected. It made me realise that our projected selves are in place to protect the vulnerable parts of our persona. Peterson (2019) suggested that you can tell whether or not

you are being authentic/congruent, by internally feeling whether it makes you feel weak or strong. My assumption was that the participants would feel less discomfort with their authentic, internal selves, than with their projected selves. My assumption was wrong. This was one of my ‘a-ha’ moments which played a part in my research.

In his study on the power of the projected self, Rapport (2005) examines the relationship between being conscious of our idea of who we are in the world, and the control we have over how we live our life in the greater world. He found that when an individual exercises conscious control over their life, it results in them feeling a sense of wellbeing in their identity (Rapport, 2005). Having control over what others believe to be true for us, is part of how we shape and form our identity. It was necessary for me to explore both the projected self and the conscious control over oneself in this research, in order to get a true understanding of the issues.

Some of the concepts explored are:

- The authentic self within each of us;
- Feelings of insignificance and a sense of being overwhelmed by social media messages;
- Fake images – Reality vs the digital world;
- Pressure to fit in and conform to the social expectations portrayed on social media;
- The roles that are played for the camera;
- The roles that are played as a result of mimicking what is seen on camera;
- The construct of identity.

4. Research Aims

Through a thorough literature search and analysis, this research addresses the following aims.

i. The overarching aim of this research was to identify the ways in which Role Method and Narradrama can be used to help teenagers identify incongruence in their perception, projection, and internalisation of self, within the social media age.
ii. This research aimed to focus on Role Theory, and to identify whether or not role repertoire can be used to help teenagers identify any incongruent roles they are performing.
iii. My research aimed to identify whether Narradrama can be used as a tool to change the stories teenagers tell of themselves, so as to change the narrative to a more authentic tale of who they are.
iv. This research aimed to identify the ways in which social media, and our projected social media identities, impact the development of our authentic, internal self.

5. Research Questions

5.1. In what way does social media impact the development of teenage identity?

5.1.1. Can we draw links between the various projected selves on social media and the authenticity of the internal self?

5.2. What aspects of Role Method and Narradrama are most effective in assisting teenagers to develop congruent self-identity?

5.2.1. In what way does role repertoire assist teenagers in identifying incongruent roles and allow for an exploration of more congruent roles?

5.2.2. In what ways does Narradrama support teenagers in creating new narratives around their authentic selves?

6. Methodology

The qualitative methodology I used for my research was that of an integrative literature review, using Grounded theory as my method of collecting and analysing data. Other forms of data analysis were considered, but grounded theory was found to best suit the needs of this research because of its objectivity and its ability to generate theory which is informed by the data. An integrative literature review produces new knowledge about a specific topic (Torraco, 2016) in which the goal is to review, critique and integrate diverse and relevant perspectives from existing, albeit sometimes contradicting, literature (Cooper, 1988).

Grounded theory was developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967 as a means of explaining and understanding social phenomena. They advocated for the extraction of concepts grounded in everyday life experiences (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). One of the basic values of grounded theory, is that it adopts a neutral position regarding human behaviour and refuses to make assumptions (Simmons, 2006). According to Engward in his paper on "Understanding grounded theory", this neutrality enables patterns in the data to surface, which in turn explain the research question. To achieve this, the researcher is encouraged to use whatever data collection method is necessary to best address the question. The collection method that is chosen must be the most suitable for gaining insight into the phenomena (Engward, 2013). The method that is used by the researcher to achieve a grounded theory, is referred to as the constant comparative method (Byrne, 2001).

The process of an integrative literature review using grounded theory as a tool, is as follows:

6.1. Definitions

Defining and elaborating on the guiding research questions in order to contemplate and approach the proposed topic accurately. It is essential for research questions to be defined fully to allow identification of the applicable study (Lane, 2018).

6.2. Literature search

Searching for relevant literature in a wide and diversified manner. Literature included peer reviewed studies, blogs, internet articles and books. The inclusion of material was based on the guiding research questions. The benefit of an integrative review is that it allowed for the inclusion of diverse forms of literature and data, thus allowing for a broader understanding of the topic (de Souza, da Silva, and de Carvalho, 2010).

6.3. Data Collection

Extracting relevant information from the literature search and organising it in a concise way to form the basis of the study. Grounded theory provides the framework for methodically collecting and analysing data in order to generate theory that speaks to the patterns we witness in human behaviour (Elsbach and Van Knippenberg, 2020) (Clamp and Gough, 1999).

6.3.1. Search criteria: Literature was found using Google search, Safari, the Wits online library and the Wits library. In terms of the content sought, literature that directly or indirectly included the relationship between teen mental, physical, and emotional health and social media was included. It also included studies on the implementation of Role Method and Narradrama in diverse settings. The search words most used were “social media’, “teenagers”, “adolescents”, “identity”, “digital world”, “technology”, “Role Method” and ‘Narradrama”.

6.3.2. Inclusion Criteria: The literature search was broad, and included blogs, online articles, news reports, peer reviewed studies, peer reviewed literature reviews and books. From a procedural perspective, I limited my search to English-language results only (Thurlow, Aiello and Portmann, 2020). This produced a wide range of results, some of which were excluded.

6.3.3. Exclusion Criteria: The exclusion criteria were studies that explicitly covered areas of social media usage that did not include teenagers, as well as literature from unreputable sites.

6.4. Data Categorisation

The data was then categorized, analysed, and discussed to establish relationships with the theoretical basis in focus. This involved a careful examination and critique of the existing literature, with a view to identifying “themes, patterns, relationships, and gaps in understanding” (Elsbach and Van Knippenberg, 2020). In his paper entitled "Grounded theory as a qualitative research methodology”, Byrne states that the data examined is usually coded at three levels. The first level involves the researcher examining the data line by line. The second level comprises the researcher comparing and contrasting the data in order to create various categories. The final level is where the researcher develops theory and defines concepts (Byrne, 2001). In this step, I utilised a data analysis tool called ATLAS.ti to analyse the data. “ATLAS.ti” allows for inductive coding of the data, where the data is used to generate codes, as opposed to the data being analysed through a predetermined set of codes (Delve, 2024).

6.5. Critical analysis

Performing data analysis in detail to make certain the data collection was valid and relevant to the guiding research questions. This process of data collection and analysis involves coding strategies (Goulding, 1998). These coding strategies are explained below.

6.6. Identification of themes

Main ideas and themes from the literature were discussed, including how they were identified and categorized. Each theme was defined and distinguished from other themes (Hart, 1998) using open, axial, and selective coding (see explanation of coding below). In their study of social media fatigue, Zhang *et al* (2020) define the different coding strategies as follows:

i. open coding – data is extracted and used to form concepts or categories;
ii. axial coding – connections found in the categories are identified and the relationship between major categories and sub-categories is explored;
iii. selective coding –a core category is identified, a systemic analysis of the relationships between categories occurs, and the research findings/theory is developed.

(Zhang *et al.*, 2020)

I once again made use of “ATLAS.ti” to group the codes, which I then named and used as my initial themes.

6.7. Results discussion

Discussion of the obtained results and critical analysis of what was evidenced (Santos et al. 2019). The developing theory that is brought about through data analysis and coding, guides the researcher to further literature which better “informs, explains and contextualises the findings” (Goulding, 1998).

6.8. Presentation

Presenting the integrative review: Drafting the study with enough information for a reader to analyse it.

7. Ethical Considerations

This study is a theoretical undertaking with no human participation involved, therefore no risks have been noted. I have received an ethical waiver from the Wits School of Arts and HREC Non-Medical, with ethical clearance number 20230829-2W. All literature used during the course of this literature review is publicly available.

I am aware that theoretical research reports such as this literature review, may be used for practical purposes should I, or other researchers, choose to test the findings. In the event that this occurs, it is important to note that teenagers are a high-risk group and caution would be required when working with them.

My personal assumptions and biases may have had an impact on the rigour of this review, even though it was conducted with cognizance of my own biases. I have attempted as far as possible to include all literature whether it supports my assumptions or not, as well as selecting a methodology and data analysis that creates a greater level of objectivity. The guidance of my supervisor has been instrumental in ensuring that I remain as objective and academically rigorous as possible.

8. Results/Findings

8.1. The Teenage Years

The teenage years can be a tumultuous time as adolescents grapple with the desire to find their own identity and be recognised as individuals separate from their parents (Purbaningsih *et al.*, 2022). During this phase, teenagers are discovering who they are, what their own values and goals are, and what their priorities are. They are also striving to find their place in the world, and in the communities around them (Government of Canada, 2002). In many societies, the teenage years are equated with psychological, social, and moral maturity (Britannica, 2024). There is a reason for this maturation.

During the phase of adolescence, the brain undergoes significant changes. The brain as a whole is more plastic and therefore more easily moulded by experiences, whilst old brain circuits that are not being used anymore are eliminated. The pre-frontal cortex of the brain also undergoes significant changes during this phase (The Human Journey, 2024). The prefrontal cortex is usually fully developed and matured by the age of 25 years, with much of its growth occurring in the teenage years (Sharma *et al.*, 2013). The pre-frontal cortex has many functions and is the area of the brain responsible for executive functioning. Below is a list of the functions of the pre-frontal cortex:

- Self-control
- Judgement
- Planning
- Emotional control
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Working memory

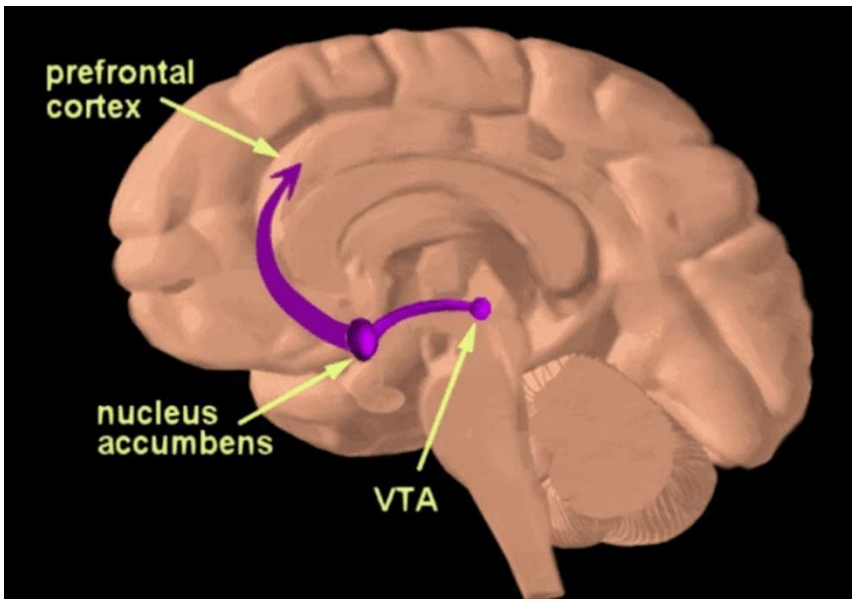
- Social behaviour
- Reasoning

(The Human Journey, 2024)

The pre-frontal cortex has also been found to be involved in a teenager's emerging sense of self, as well as mental states such as intentions – whether towards oneself or others (The Human Journey, 2024). Teenagers begin to develop the ability to think more abstractly, which helps them set long-term goals and make plans. They may also become concerned with questions regarding politics, philosophy, and social issues. Falling in love and long-term relationships are another aspect of this stage of life (Stanford Medicine, 2024).

Brain development is also related to social experiences during adolescence. The changes that occur in the brain cause teenagers to become more focussed on peer relationships than on family relationships. This focus on peer relationships, coupled with the changes in the pre-frontal cortex, can cause teenagers to take greater risks (either negative or positive) in the interests of social rewards. They may believe that the social reward outweighs the potential consequences of those risks (NIMH, Unknown).

Below is a diagram of the reward pathways in the brain. Dopamine is produced in the VTA (ventral tegmental area), and travels to the nucleus accumbens and then on to the pre-frontal cortex.



(The Reward Foundation, 2024)

Imaging of the brain has shown that the reward centres in the adolescent brain have a greater response to rewards, or potential rewards, than at other times in our lives. Peer approval is perceived as rewarding, leading adolescents to respond positively to it (The Human Journey, 2024). This can lead to high-risk behaviours.

Adolescence is a critical time for developing habits (both emotional and social), such as regular exercise, good sleeping patterns, development of skills (coping, interpersonal and problem-solving) as well as learning how to manage emotions effectively. These habits are essential for mental wellbeing (World Health Organisation, 2021). Studies have revealed that teenagers do not get sufficient sleep, often leaving them struggling with their emotions and social relationships. Sleep studies suggest that smartphones are largely responsible for this lack of sleep due to the abundance of video games, streaming, music, and social media apps (Ploderer, Rodgers, and Liang, Z, 2022).

According to the World Health Organisation (2021), a high level of exposure to risk factors is likely to have a negative impact on mental wellbeing. Some of those risk factors include

the pressure to conform (i.e. peer pressure) and the natural exploration of identity that occurs at this phase in life. One of the biggest risk factors can be media influences and pressure to conform to gender norms, which can intensify the discrepancy between lived and perceived reality. There are, however, factors that can combat these risk factors. Supportive and protective home and school environments, including having good relationships with family members and peers, can be important in combating the potential negative impact of high-risk factors (World Health Organisation, 2021). However, the fact remains that the popularity of social media amongst young people and adolescence, can make it influential (Makwana *et al.*, 2018). In interviews conducted by the Guardian with many young females, the youngsters admitted that they were obsessed with their need to fit in on social media, and regarded their social media presence as more important than showing up in their 'real' lives, leading to feelings of insecurity and reduced self-esteem (Gajanan, 2015).

In his discussion on teen development, Mersch states that the teenage years are a time when parental input, advice and guidance are commonly rejected, however, it is essentially a time when more support and supervision is needed. Teenagers tend to have a sense of invincibility, which, coupled with their impulsive nature and strong ego, can be dangerous. One of the primary goals of the teenage years is to develop a sense of autonomy and independence from their parents, whilst establishing a personal identity. This identity is closely linked to their peer groups (Mersch, 2024) and their peer group subculture (Davies and Eynon, 2013).

8.2. Social Media

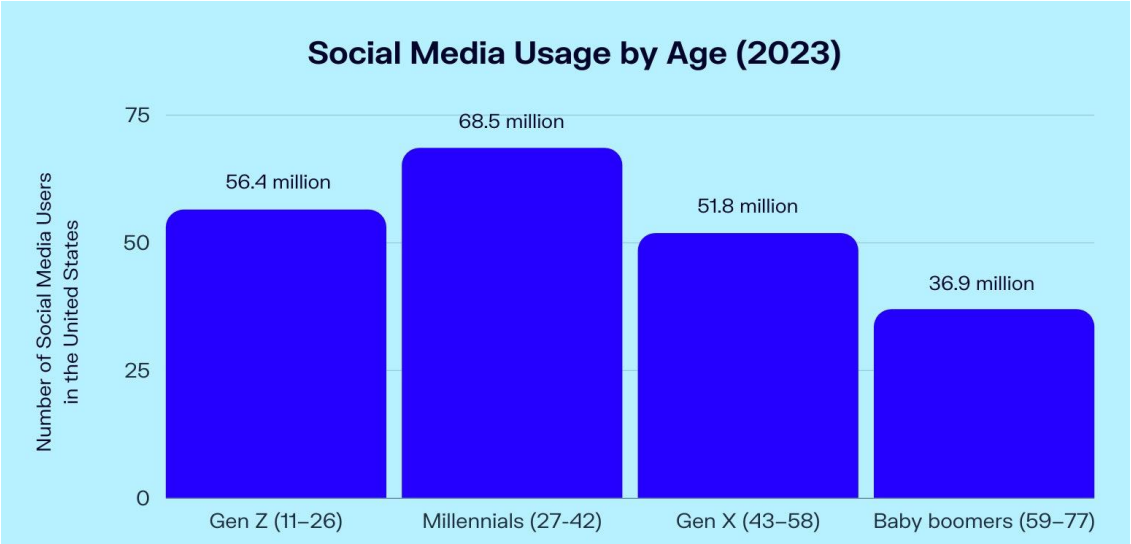
Our world and the world of our teenagers and children, has become progressively saturated by an increase in the speed and frequency of communication. The rapid increase of personal mobile devices such as phones, laptops and/or tablets, as well as the increase of online social networks, has caused a revolution in our everyday interactions. We now have the ability to connect on a social level with others anytime and anyplace (Nielsen, 2017). Social media allows us to reach across borders and seas and communicate with either a known, or unknown, person about anything we wish to communicate about.

In 2021, the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, stated that more than 50% of all teenagers access a minimum of one social media site on a daily basis and at least 75% of all teenagers have an active profile on at least one of these sites (Adventist Health, 2021). A 2023 report suggested that these number have increased substantially. The Pew Research Centre conducted research in October 2023 into teens and their use of social media. Their research found that 90% of teenagers use YouTube daily, whilst 60% of teens access other social media sites daily (Price, 2023). In terms of time spent using devices to access the various sites, the American Academy of Paediatrics (AAP) claims that most teenagers spend approximately seven hours per day on their devices. The recommended usage amount is a maximum of 10 hours per week (Adventist Health, 2021). Approximately 17% of teens reported that they are constantly on one or other social media site (Price, 2023). This is an alarming difference between recommended and actual usage.

In his newspaper article entitled “Screenagers”, Evans (2017) acknowledges that technology in this modern age can be an extremely helpful tool. Some teenagers use it passively, whilst others use it in active ways (Ferrari and Schick, 2020). Active use can be described as

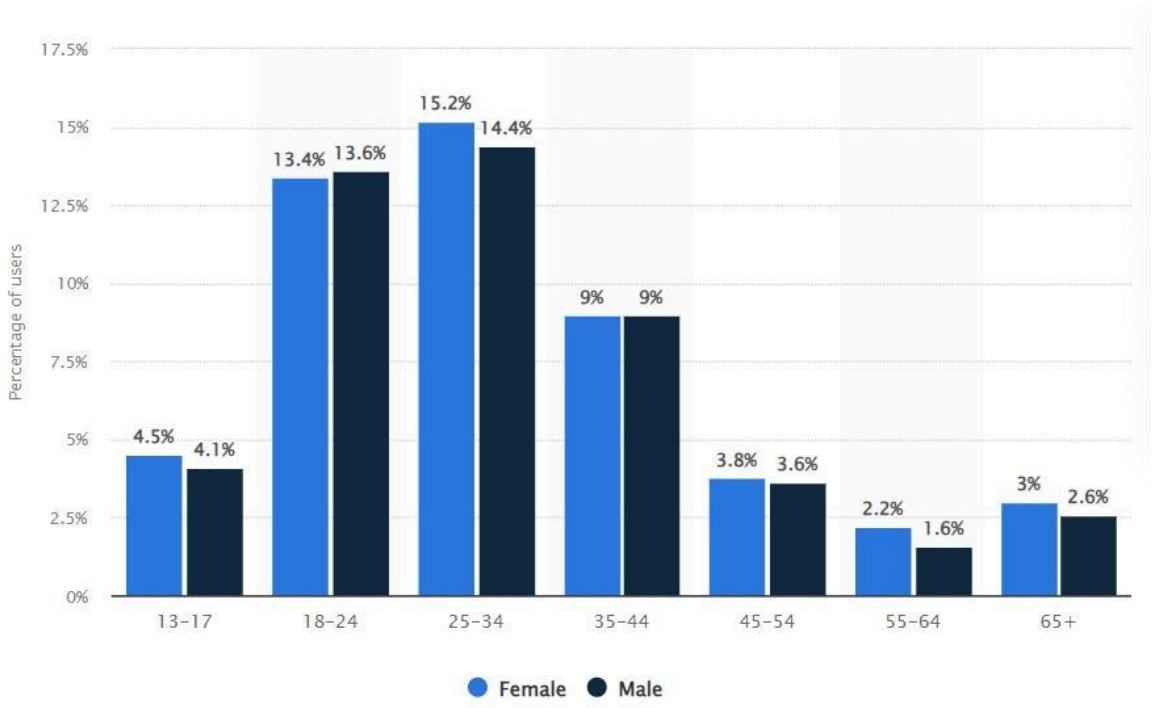
posting content, comments, tweets, opinions, photos, etc., whilst passive use can be described as merely viewing others content, comments, or profiles (Ozimek, Brailovskaia and Bierhoff, 2023). The potential pitfall lies in the fact that it appears that children and teenagers seem to struggle to use technology in moderation (Evans, 2017).

Oberlo (an online shopping platform), published results from an eMarketer survey on social media statistics. The below graph gives the 2023 statistics for social media usage based on age groups in the USA.



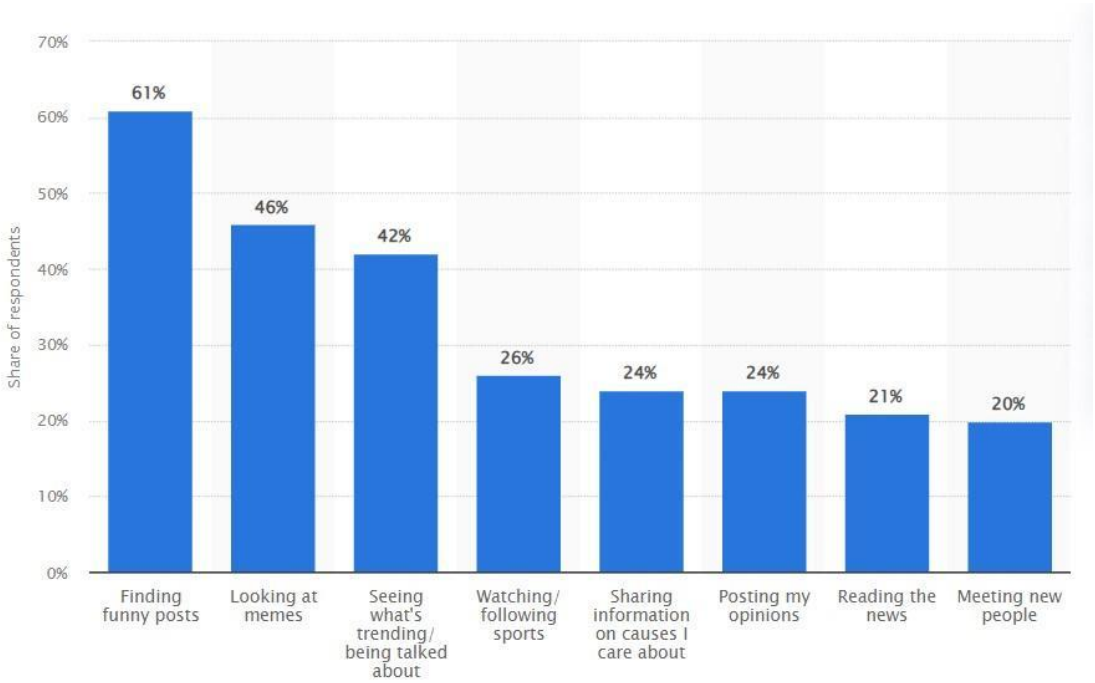
(*Social Media Usage Statistics by Age*, 2023)

As this literature review has been conducted in South Africa, it is appropriate to look at the statistics for this country. Statistica, which is a data analysis and visualization program, published the following analysis in graph form, which looks at social media usage by age in South Africa.



(*South Africa: social media user age and gender distribution 2023*, no date)

Based on both above graphs, it can be seen that teenagers are the second largest group of social media users. This confirms my assumption that teenagers are an appropriate target group for this research. Moreover, teenagers are living a new reality in which they have moved from passive consumers to active participants. Not only do they interact with others online, but they also select what content they wish to consume and engage with, as well as customizing applications to co-create digital content (Ferrari and Schick, 2020). Here, I have once again turned to Statistica to gather information about the main reasons teenagers worldwide use social media. The graph below indicates the findings.



(Global teens reasons for using social media, 2023)

As can be seen from the above graph, the two top reasons that teenagers have cited for social media use, is finding funny posts, and looking at memes. The third most common reason is seeing what is trending. All three of these reasons give cause for dopamine to be released into the brain. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that aids in sending messages between nerve cells. It controls feelings of satisfaction, motivation, and pleasure, as well as having an impact on memory, sleep patterns, learning ability, mood, ability to concentrate and other bodily functions. An increase of dopamine in the brain makes you feel good, which can lead to a repeat of the behaviour that caused the dopamine increase. Too much dopamine in your system can lead to aggression, lack of impulse control, ADHD, and addiction (Health Direct, 2023)

Our bodies release dopamine every time we learn something new. From an evolutionary perspective, this encouraged people to seek new knowledge and experiences (Evans, 2017). In this new age of technology and social media, that dopamine release is only one

click away – whether seeking funny posts, memes, or trending information. The ease with which this dopamine rush can now be obtained, makes technology and social media highly addictive (Evans, 2017). According to the National Institute of Mental Health, the brain is being fine-tuned during the teenage years. The pre-frontal cortex, which is responsible for decision-making and prioritizing, is the last area of the brain to mature; usually between the ages of mid- to late twenties (NIMH, no date). The pre-frontal cortex is also responsible for self-control. The combination of an impairment in self-control and a potentially addictive behaviour, could be disastrous for teens (Evans, 2017).

An advantage of social media is that it allows an individual the ability to use one click as a response, for example the 'Like' button. An interesting question to ponder is what these one-click symbols mean to both the sender and the receiver – and whether or not the intended meaning of these signals is lost in translation. A single click has the ability to be interpreted in a large variety of ways, as well as the ability to have multiple meanings (Hayes, Carr, and Wohn, 2016). With the rapid advancement of digital communication, the use of popularity cues, emojis and emoticons has become more commonplace (Zareen, 2016). An example of a popularity cue is the 'Like' button. A smiley face is an example of an emoji, whilst a person dancing is an example of an emoticon.

Popularity cues are graphical representations of social approval or disapproval, thus resulting in posts with a high number of likes being perceived as favourable. In this way, popularity cues serve as "social signals for users who are confronted with them" (Haim, Kümpel and Brosius, 2018:187). The more likes a post has, the more it will be viewed, read, and shared, regardless of its content and regardless of whether or not individuals agree with it. Carr et al (2016) have found that what began as a phatic tool for communication, has

evolved into a symbol to which meaning is ascribed by senders and receives alike. In fact, further research found that individuals will idiosyncratically appoint different meanings to the same cue depending on the sender and/or situation (Carr, Wohn, and Hayes, 2016).

In addition to the propensity of individuals to share posts with higher popularity cues (PCs),

> "such PCs are put to algorithmic use within filtered online environments such as social network sites; thus, they can also serve as indirect signals for users through the selection and arrangement of information based on its popularity"
>
> (Haim, Kümpel and Brosius, 2018)

The importance of all of this in terms of this research paper, is that popularity cues are both directly and indirectly capable of influencing a teenager's perception about the posts they are viewing. This may impact their decisions, their understanding of things, their view on life and their subsequent behaviour. It also means that a teenager's beliefs may change if the posts they share get significant social approval - even if they did not believe the shared posts to begin with (Haim, Kümpel and Brosius, 2018).

Individuals will initially share information with others, and then begin to believe that information (Walther *et al.*, 2022). This sharing of information will take place, whether that information is dubious or not, in pursuit of various goals – one of which is social approval (Duffy, Tandoc and Ling, 2020). As previously discussed, social approval symbols are but a click away; easy to encode, straightforward to transmit, and universally understood (Hayes, Carr, and Wohn, 2016). Through this abundant approval, individuals may potentially align their beliefs with the content they have posted (Crockett, 2017). This is cause for

concern as the teenage brain is still malleable and open to persuasion. Perceived social approval may be significant enough to alter self-belief, and through this shift, alter the core identity of a teenager.

In their journal article entitled “The effect of social media on perception”, Walther et al (2022) explore the hyper personal model of computer mediated communication (CMC), which focuses on changes in perception as a result of online interactions. The hyper personal model asserts that the online world, specifically social media, has created a malleable environment in terms of content creation. This malleability has the potential to promote selective self-presentation, which is then reinforced by other users. This results in “changes in individuals’ perceptions of self, partner, and relationships” (Walther *et al.*, 2022:662). Within the hyper personal model, is a concept called hyper personal communication. In this type of online communication, the level of affection and emotion expressed between the communicators, far surpasses that of face-to-face interactions (Quintas-Mendes, Morgado and Amante, 2008). This again potentially changes an individual’s perception of self, partner, and relationships, which in turn can have an impact on the identity development of teenagers experiencing this.

The model makes use of the social information processing theory, which says that online users will use whichever communicative code systems they can find to encode and decode messages. These messages may be socioemotional messages. The inability to access the ‘correct’ communicative code system (or cues), leaves them open to misinterpretation. The types of cues available could include the quality of the message, the source of the message, and the endorsements the message has received. These endorsements could be either tacit (i.e. popularity cues) or explicit (i.e. the comments it has generated). It has been found that

unacquainted receivers of online messages will compensate for the lack of available cues by interpreting any gaps in a positive manner (Walther and Whitty, 2021). This will often result in a false understanding of the original message.

The hyper personal model, which dates back to the 1990's, has, for the most part, obtained empirical support, especially when considering text-only communication. It has been based on four principal ideas namely enhanced control, asynchronous communication, physical distance and restructuring of cognitive reserves. Scott and Fullwood (2020) have, however, found four areas in which it is not supported by research, namely, the broader context of CMC, the increase of pictures and videos in online platforms, the language used in these online platforms, and online self-disclosure (Scott and Fullwood, 2020). They have suggested that the model be updated.

As per Knobloch-Westerwick and Hastall (2010), social media offers individuals the opportunity to live vicariously through chosen role models. By making use of observational learning, social media users can rapidly expand their knowledge and skills by observing and following these chosen role models. It is this selective observation of role models that, according to Bandura, actually influences people. Before CMC, individuals were predominantly influenced by those role models who were in their direct environment. This has now changed substantially. Individuals can now choose their role models from millions of digital technology users, making the choice of which role models to select ever more challenging, and ever more important (Knobloch-Westerwick and Hastall, 2010).

So how does an individual select their role model in this current digital age? Social psychologist, Leon Festinger, says that individuals regularly engage in social comparison. It

is human nature for individuals to compare themselves to someone who is similar to them, thus allowing for better evaluation of personal abilities and opinions. There are two forms of social comparison that take place. The first is called upward comparison. This is where an individual will compare themselves with someone who is in a more positive situation than themselves. This is done in an effort to gain knowledge, which will ultimately lead to self-improvement. The second type of social comparison that takes place is called downward comparison. Here an individual will compare themselves with somebody who is in a more negative situation to themselves. This is done for the purposes of self-enhancement (Knobloch-Westerwick and Hastall, 2010).

Knobloch-Westerwick and Hastall (2010) go on further to say that an important influence regarding the choice of upward or downward comparison is self-esteem. It has previously been suggested that individuals with low self-esteem will gravitate to downward comparisons in order to feel better about themselves. Other research has found that individuals will look for people or information that support their pre-existing self-belief in an effort for coherence - even if that self-belief is negative. However, more recent research has found that individuals with low self-esteem will lean towards upward comparisons in an effort to affiliate themselves with others who are more successful than they are. On the other hand, those individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to utilise downward comparison as a means of setting themselves apart from others (Knobloch-Westerwick and Hastall, 2010).

Another concerning aspect of social media in terms of teenage identity development, is cyber bullying and/or hate speech. The South African Human Rights Commission defines hate speech as that “which goes beyond mere insults or offensive language, and which may infringe the dignity of certain persons or groups” (South African Human Rights Commission,

2022). They go on further to say that any derogatory language or expression that is meant to belittle the humanity, intelligence, beliefs, or appearance of a group of people, is considered hate speech. The impact of such speech is that it can negatively impact an individual's self-worth, as well as cause significant harm, hurt, distress and humiliation. It is both degrading and dehumanising, with the consequence of depriving individuals of their fundamental rights to dignity and equality (South African Human Rights Commission, 2022).

According to the chief medical officer of an Australian Health care organisation, Adventist (2021), social media has some benefits, but it also has some drawbacks. On a positive note, it allows for easy connections between friends, and the sharing of projects or creative work. On the less positive side, it can be extremely difficult for individuals to escape the constant messaging and addiction to the online world (Adventist Health, 2021). This begins to create an imbalance in social media usage and opens individuals up to cyberbullying in their own homes.

The anonymity and publicizing ability of social media, allows those that wish to spread hate speech, an open platform (South African Human Rights Commission, 2022). Whether the messages sent are true, innocuous, or false, those that believe them, and even those that don't, can, and will, propagate them with ease due to the nature of social media (Walther *et al.*, 2022). As mentioned previously, these widely spread messages have a significant impact on the victim, potentially causing shame, fear, hurt, depression, low self-esteem, and insecurity (Purbaningsih *et al.*, 2022). Insecurity, depression, and low self-esteem can cause an individual to question who, or what they are – especially if their own self-perception contradicts how others see them. This in turn, may lead to identity issues (Perera, 2020).

According to research conducted by Purbaningsih et al (2022), the ease of social media usage has led to teenagers feeling more comfortable in the online world than they do in the real world; with most teenagers now using social media as an instrument for self-existence. As social media creates a fusion between the public and private lives and spaces of its users, we are seeing a cultural shift involving the uploading of all personal details and activities onto social media. This in turn is causing the formation of self-identity based on the interactions of friends, colleagues, and strangers online (Purbaningsih *et al.*, 2022).

In his newspaper article on "Teenagers and social media", Barron (2023) explains how social media has become central to how teenagers both communicate and process their world. Many teenagers see great benefit in social media, specifically when it comes to learning about new cultures and possible new career paths. Many view social media as an escape, where they are able to find online communities that they feel comfortable in. However, these same teenagers will admit to the negative aspects of social media, most especially the cyberbullying that occurs. But it is not just cyberbullying that is troubling. Of concern are the images of the 'perfect' body that teenagers can find online. They cannot help but compare themselves to these images and find themselves falling short. This, naturally, has a substantial impact on their self-image and self-esteem. Some teenagers have admitted that they become so focused on the likes and comments that their posts receive, that they begin to lose their sense of themselves (Barron, 2023).

Alexander et al (2024), tell us in their paper on "*Social media and postsecondary student adoption of mental health labels"* that many individuals use social media at a time in their lives when they may first begin to suffer from mental health issues. Contemporary teenagers now use psychiatric language on social media when describing their social interactions or

their mental well-being. Teenagers make use of social media as a resource for mental health issues because it is free and easy to use and there's a wealth of information available. Unfortunately, much of this information has not been scientifically validated. Approximately 30% of teenagers have admitted to searching for mental health information via social media (Montagni *et al.*, 2020). Some have found information that has led them to seek treatment or support, whilst others can experience what has been termed cyberchondria. Cyberchondria can be explained as the use of social media and the Internet to create an increasing concern about their health. This may lead to self-diagnosis and mental health labelling. Many teenagers begin to see mental illness as a way of life, and it informs their core identity (Alexander *et al.*, 2024).

Alexander et al (2024) go on further to say that algorithms which are embedded in social media, determine what content is seen by users, based on the user's history and engagement pattern. An individual's mood will affect the type of content they engage with online. For example, if an individual is feeling sad, they may engage with more sad content. This results in the algorithms being skewed and providing more sad content for that individual to view. What this means is that the effective nature of the content can cause an individual to identify with what is being presented as diagnostic criteria for their mental health, and through that process, for their self-imposed labels. Labelling can occur through a formal psychiatric diagnostic process, through a self-driven process which is tied into an individual's self-concept, or through an informal peer process (Alexander *et al.*, 2024). These labels can be seen as a way that teenagers define their identity (Money, 2023).

According to Kraus et al (2021) in their paper examining the effects of social networking sites on self-esteem, self-esteem can be defined as a subjective value judgment of self

which is important for a number of life outcomes. These outcomes include an individual's health, satisfaction in relationships, as well as job performance. Self-esteem is dynamic in nature. It can be viewed as a measure of an individual's failures and successes. Other people's acceptance or rejection of an individual can also be gauged by their level of self-esteem. Empirical evidence confirms that social networking sites are associated with alterations in self-esteem (Krause *et al.*, 2021). In their paper entitled "Personal identity processes and self-esteem", Luyckx et al (2013) state that identity and self-esteem are closely linked. According to Erikson's theory of identity development, an individual's identity crisis is only resolved once the individual has achieved synthesis in their identity. The opposite can be said for identity confusion, where the individual's identity remains vague. An Individual with a strong identity will typically have a strong self-esteem. However, an individual with a vague or non-existent identity structure, is likely to suffer from low self-esteem. Self-esteem theorists also claim that identity and self-esteem are interdependent (Luyckx *et al.*, 2013). For this reason, I will be looking at the benefit of Narradrama for building self-esteem.

8.3. Overview of Narradrama

8.3.1 The role of story

There are 3 types of stories – those we tell ourselves, those we tell others, and those that others tell us. Stories can be true, metaphorical or both. They reflect the various states of the human mind, as well as acting like mirrors that reflect parts of ourselves. Our subconscious mind will recognise the symbolic depictions in stories even if our conscious mind does not (Neill, 2008). The stories we tell ourselves, about ourselves, can be referred to as life stories. These life stories are co-authored by us and the cultural context within which our lives are embedded, thus making them psychosocial constructs. Life stories,

which will signify cultural norms, assumptions, and values, make sense within the cultural frame that they have developed, however, they also differentiate individuals (McAdams, 2001). According to Americans for the Arts (2019), stories are pervasive in our lives – as are narratives. A narrative can be understood as stories within stories. Because narratives reflect our complex lives, they are continuously changing. New information that comes about in our daily lives, is incorporated into our understanding through the common thread of our constantly evolving stories. Stories can expose our conscious and unconscious thoughts, attitudes, dreams, motivations, fears, and values. Our narratives create opportunities for us to discover aspects of ourselves through describing, reflecting, connecting, and extracting. We are also given opportunities to shape our stories through listening, interpreting, sharing, building, and reframing. “At its best, narrative creates resonance, understanding, humanity, empathy, caring, meaning, connection, context, recognition, respect, and harmony” (Americans for the Arts, 2019:12).

8.3.2. A Narrative Approach

This approach postulates that the stories an individual tells, can be seen as a looking glass into who that individual is (Hurd, 2015). Stories allow us to understand human experiences and the complexities of those experiences. The telling of stories is a method of communication which is both indirect and cross cultural (Scaletti R and Hocking C, 2010). Stories can be instrumental in the identity formation of individuals, through the simulation of experiences into an individual’s ever changing life story. It is the internalisation of these stories that gives an individual their sense of purpose and unity (Hurd, 2015). Telling someone your story assists with the meaning making aspect of narrative (McLean, 2005). Individuals tell protracted stories about their childhood. These stories can be about their first love, their school years, their family relationships and/or the way their thinking around a

certain subject came about (Gergen and Gergen, 1988). Individuals who do not hold the power over their life stories, and who are unable to “retell them, rethink them, deconstruct them, joke about them, and change them as times change, truly are powerless because they cannot think new thoughts” (Rushdie, 1992:432).

Narrative therapy helps individuals become experts in their own lives (Clarke, 2023), in fact the notion of personal agency is a core principle of narrative therapy (Botha, 2019). It is underpinned by a constructivist worldview, which postulates that an individual's understanding of the world is not fixed but is continuously revised as new information is presented (Geldard and Gerdard, 2017). There is an emphasis on the narratives that individuals continuously develop throughout their lives. Narrative therapists believe that meaning is given to experiences and relationships based on an individual’s pre-existing narratives (Combs and Freedman, 2012). Individuals can have many internal stories at once, for example, stories relating to their relationships, their abilities, and their self-esteem (Clarke, 2023). Narrative therapists assume that the way in which an individual will experience problems is by stories. They believe that these stories are constructs of our social groups and our previous life experiences (Combs and Freedman, 2012). They will listen to understand what an individual has experienced whilst also listening for implicit or explicit references to occurrences that would not ordinarily be present in the plot of a problematic story (Combs and Freedman, 2012).

This approach to understanding the meaning of stories in an individual's life, provides a therapeutic opportunity for resolving both internal and external conflict through storytelling (Scaletti and Hocking, 2010). According to the intrapsychic perspective of narrative therapy, a narrative therapist proposes that an individual is not able to objectively understand events

going on around them and will therefore create a story or narrative about them. What this means for the therapist is that their role is to interpret how an individual has storied their world and what the meaning of that story is (Phipps and Vorster, 2015). The mental health of an individual will begin to suffer due to the problem saturated stories that an individual has created. Gonçalves et al (2009) tell us that these problem saturated stories do not allow for the possibility of narratives that do not match the problem to be incorporated into the story, thus imposing rigid constraints to the interpretation of events experienced by the individual. As an example, if an individual has a problem story in which they narrate themselves to be depressed, they will be blind to any alternatives that present themselves during their experiences. They will view all episodes in their life as additional proof that they are indeed depressed. As a result of this, the problem that they have narrated occupies their entire identity (Gonçalves, Matos and Santos, 2009).

According to their article titled “Innovative moments and change in narrative therapy”, Matos et al (2009) state that the narrative approach views the creation of new life stories as the only way that a client can correct a psychological dysfunction. This is referred to as the re-authoring model. The re-authoring model suggests that one of the most important therapeutic tasks is to identify what is referred to as “unique outcomes” (UO). UO’s are details of the narrative that fall outside of the problem saturated story and can be thought of as openings to new possibilities and new stories (Gonçalves, Matos and Santos, 2009). The problem saturated story is usually reduced to a single theme, such as depression, rendering individuals unable to think of alternative ways to act or feel. This inability to think of alternative options, leads them to trivialise, or altogether forget, that the UO’s exist (Matos *et al.*, 2009). Narrative therapists use both language and interaction, in a safe space, as a means of helping individuals to find alternative interpretations that make room for unique outcomes to be integrated into an individual’s narrative (Bayes, 2023).

In order to achieve this re-authoring process, narrative therapy makes use of metaphors. A metaphor is a symbolic representation that communicates another concept. It can be words, actions, or visual representations. The use of metaphor allows an individual to tackle an issue or a feeling, without doing so in a direct and invasive manner (Hurd, 2015). Using narrative metaphor, a narrative therapist views a client's stories as reflecting many possible accounts of an event, as opposed to the absolute truth of an event (Combs and Freedman, 2012). In their article on metaphor, Legowski and Brownlee (2001) state that metaphor plays such a pivotal role in narrative therapy, that narrative itself can be seen as an implicit metaphor (Legowski and Brownlee, 2001).

According to McAdams in his book titled "The Stories We Live By" (1997), identity itself can be viewed as a life story. During the adolescent years, individuals look for meaning and purpose in life, leading them to develop personal myths that become their life stories. These myths have been tacitly composed on an unconscious level, over the course of their lives, and continue to be revised as life experiences occur. What's important to remember about these myths, is that they are not delusions or self-deception, but rather a means to organise and gain a sense of cohesion over a range of scattered experiences. In order to know someone properly, you need to know their identity – mere trait attributes are not sufficient. To know their identity, you need to know their story. This goes down to the individual level, where an individual needs to know their own story, including all its complexities and myths, in order to truly know themselves (McAdams, 1997). The life story theory of identity postulates that life stories not only operate to make sense of past and present experiences, but also to anticipate the future (McLean, 2005). They are made intelligible due to the unfolding process of the sequence of life events, therefore making an individual's identity a result of this unfolding, and not sudden and unexplained (Gergen and Gergen, 1988). Over

a period of time, the adding, taking away and changing life story will help an individual internalise a new narrative repertoire, which in turn, will lead to a new role identity (Ibarra and Barbulescu, 2010). MacIntyre (2007) has proposed that these life stories form the base of an individual's moral character. Individual's "think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to" their life stories (Sarbin, 1986).

8.3.3. Drama Therapy

The North American Drama Therapy Association defines Drama Therapy as an active, experiential, and embodied form of therapy that enables clients to explore their inner selves through the use of dramatic enactments and techniques (NADTA, 2019). Drama Therapy has its roots in psychodrama - a form of therapy developed by Jacob Moreno in the 1920's. Johnson (2009) tells us that the work done by Jacob Moreno, would go on to inspire the founders of modern-day Drama Therapy. In the 1930's the first use of the term "Dramatherapy" was used in the UK by Peter Slade (Maynard, 2018). Drama Therapy began to move away from a strictly psychodramatic approach in the 1960's, with the first national Drama Therapy association being founded in the USA in 1979 (Johnson, 2009). Modern-day Drama Therapists use an assortment of theatre processes and activities as a means of aiding their clients towards their therapeutic goals (Dennis, 2020).

According to Renée Emunah (2009), a pioneer and global leader in the field of Drama Therapy, both drama and therapy involve risk taking. They are both multi layered exercises which can both instil trust and evoke resistance (Emunah, 2009). Combining these two endeavours, Drama Therapy uses drama for the intention of healing mental health concerns (Jones, 2007). Drama has the ability to heal by connecting an individual to their feelings, as well as to both their conscious and unconscious thoughts (Jones, 2007). Drama is also

particularly good at connecting individuals and communities, thus fostering relationships which strengthen healing connections (Jones, 2007).

To achieve this, Drama Therapists make use of 9 core processes. These are:

1. dramatic projection;
2. empathy and distancing;
3. role playing
4. personification and impersonation;
5. interactive audience and witnessing;
6. embodiment;
7. playing;
8. life-drama connection; and
9. transformation.

(Jones, 2007)

By making use of these core processes, drama therapists are able to provide a context for individuals to share their stories. Individuals are also able to express their emotions, problem-solve, set goals, and ultimately achieve much needed catharsis (NADTA, 2019). In order to achieve this shift, Drama Therapists will encourage their clients to assume different roles and dramatize an alternative story (Dunne, 2008). The theatre art form permits individuals to step out of everyday reality and become enveloped in dramatic reality, fostering creation through embodiment (Jennings, 1992). It is this embodiment that uses all of our senses which allows for “both an expansion of experience and an outer clarification of perception” (Jennings, 1992:5).

Jones (2007) speaks about the relationship between Drama Therapy and identity. He states that identity can be viewed as not merely an internal entity, but as a combination of self-experience and self-knowledge, as well as the perception of self that is based on relations such as race groupings. As self-experiences and self-knowledge change, so does identity. The idea that identity is changeable, is where Drama Therapy fits in. It can aid in the shift from negative to positive using active methods such as role play and improvisation. These types of methods emphasise connection as being a formative force in identity formation (Yarmarkov, 2016).

8.3.4. Narradrama

Narradrama, which was originated by Pamela Dunne, can be seen as a combination of Drama Therapy and an extension of narrative therapy (Dunne, 2006). One of the main differences between narrative therapy and Narradrama, is that narrative therapy primarily makes use of talk therapy, whilst Narradrama makes use of creative processes such as embodiment and witnessing (Carroll, 2023). As with narrative therapy, Narradrama is story-centred, allowing for story expansion through the use of a variety of techniques. It also incorporates the core processes of Drama Therapy, drawing upon an individual's body, mind, and senses (Parsons, 2014). Narradrama is a client-centred approach which endeavours to help individuals develop their own strategies and resources (Parsons, 2014). Individuals are encouraged to make use of a variety of experiential and creative art practises as a means of overcoming their challenges and discovering for themselves how to create their own preferred future (Dunne, 2006). It is based on the belief that increasing an individual's creativity will increase their ability to tap into hidden, or forgotten, knowledge that in turn, will allow them to gain an alternative perspective of themselves (Parsons, 2014).

The Narradrama tools help clients connect their intellect, their bodies, and their emotions, whilst allowing them to explore their personal, psychological and/or social concerns (Dunne, 2008). Narradrama is relationally grounded and avoids differences in the power dynamic. This makes it especially appealing to adolescents (Dunne, 2009). The therapeutic goal of Narradrama is to free individuals from any social or personal limitations that keep them entrenched in their problem-saturated story (Dunne, 2009), through a combination of creative expression and role expansion (Parsons, 2014). Dennis (2020) in his article on "Reclaiming Metaphor; Myths, Monsters, and Narratives with LGBTQ+ Adolescents in Drama Therapy", tells us that one of the ways in which this is achieved, is through the following key concepts borrowed from narrative therapy:

- Outsider Witnesses – this is a group of observers who witness the action but are not actively involved. This outside group then reflects on what they have witnessed and compares it to what the active participant group has reflected. The two reflections allow for different perspectives of the same story to be seen, thus opening up new possibilities for the interpretation of the story.
- Double Listening – this is a technique to discover what is being overlooked or is not immediately obvious in a story. It allows for implicit parts of a story to be explored and brought to light.
- Re-Membering Conversations – this is where an individual remembers others who have significantly impacted their lives and shaped their stories in either a positive or negative way. This enables an individual to confront any negative voices that drown out either their own voice, or other positive voices.
- Reauthoring – opening up narratives to alternative interpretations. These narratives can be either related to actions, or identity.

(Dennis, 2020)

Narradrama is usually arranged into 8 sessions with 8 steps that are flexible and non-hierarchical:

1. Warming Up to New Descriptions of Self Identity and Environment;

2. Externalizing the Problem;

3. Possibility Extension;

4. Externalizing Choices;

5. Personal Agency;

6. Alternative Stories and Unique Outcomes;

7. Restory Life;

8. Closure, Reflection and Rituals

(Afary and Alteet, 2022).

In these sessions, a set of methods and techniques can be used to achieve healing for individuals.

- Externalisation. Emphasis is placed on the problem lying outside of an individual, rather than being something that has arisen from inside the individual. The objectification of the problem empowers the individual as they are no longer the target of objectification. Instead, the problem becomes disempowered which allows an individual to revise their relationship with it. This results in new channels of opportunity being opened up for the individual.
- Role-play and Improvisation. When an individual takes on a role, they are both themselves and not themselves, which allows for both engagement and separation.

This allows for distancing to take place which leads to the possibility of viewing a situation from a multitude of perspectives.

- Internalised other interviewing and active role interviewing. This technique works well with couples. It is where one person assumes the role of another (either their partner, or someone from their life) and answers questions as if they were that person.
- Deconstruction and reconstruction of the alternative story. Here a problem is deconstructed so that the therapist and the client can examine situations where a problem may have influenced them but did not. These exceptions are then dramatically enacted to create familiarity.
- Identifying and dramatizing unique outcomes. As previously stated, unique outcomes are details of the narrative that have fallen outside of the problem saturated story. Dramatizing these UO's can change an individual's perception and allow them to integrate these into an alternative story.
- Action oriented interventions for remembering conversations. One group member volunteers to become the scribe. The scribe writes down all significant figures from the individual's life. Empty chairs then represent these figures and, as the individual sits in each chair they assume the role of the significant figure. Playing these various roles can expand the dialogue and open up possibilities for new perspectives.

  (Dunne, 2008)

Dunne (2008) goes on to tell us that every individual has stories about their life, and every individual decides which of these stories to embrace. Of great importance is what an individual chooses to emphasise or omit in these stories, as these aspects will have a great influence on both the teller and the listener. As mentioned previously, problem free experiences will be filtered out of an individual's memories and perceptions if they do not corroborate their dominant problem saturated story. This may result in an individual being

unable to use their creativity or imagination in a way that would enable them to see alternatives to their problem saturated story. Ultimately this inability to integrate problem free experiences and to use their imagination to see alternatives, may severely limit an individual's resourcefulness and lead to hopelessness (Dunne, 2008). Narradrama facilitates the process of making the invisible become visible, which opens up the possibility for numerous perspectives to be viewed (Pather, 2017).

Performative assimilation of the developing re-authored story has been shown, through interpersonal neurobiology studies, to restore the affective function within the brain, by reducing the dominance of the problem saturated story, specifically when an individual sees themselves as the problem (Maclennan and Duvall, 2017). Positive psychology tells us that an individual who is able to both experience and expand on a positive emotion in terms of their life story, is better able to neutralise, and form alternative options to, a problem state. Therefore, by allowing and enabling an individual to assume new roles and possibilities, Narradrama both restores the affective functioning of the brain and allows for neutralisation of the problem state (Dunne, Madrigal and Afary, 2022).

Expanding an individual's role repertoire should aid them in finding alternatives to their problem saturated stories (Dunne, 2008). Role play is one of the core processes that will enable an individual to explore and expand on their problem saturated story. It is the task of the therapist to help individuals in a nondirective way to express their emotions, expand their awareness and discover alternative stories (Dunne, 2009). Emotional catharsis can be triggered through the enactment and reliving of life experiences. By assuming the role of a theatrical character, an individual will be able to express what lies beneath a real-life role (Pather, 2017).

Narradrama views the concept of identity as cultural, relational, broad, and multi-storied (Dennis, 2020). The way in which an individual conceptualizes their identity, is facilitated by the stories that they tell themselves (Madigan, 2019). Identity is dynamic, multifaceted, and entrenched in role (Yarmarkov, 2016). Through role exploration in the Narradrama processes, Narradrama creates space for identity change (Dunne, 2009). It is through reflecting and engaging with the new meanings that have been discovered in the re-authored story, that an individual's preferred identity can be honoured, or shifted (Yarmarkov, 2016). In his journal article on "Enhancing Self-Efficacy in Young Adults through Narradrama", Parsons (2014) states that the narrative approach, specifically Narradrama, is well-suited to enable the reconstruction of identity process. Narradrama focuses on establishing a sense of personal agency whilst assisting individuals with the re-authoring of their experiences and their lives. Through this process, individuals are able to reconstruct their identity in ways that strengthen this newfound sense of personal agency (Parsons, 2014). More and more, especially with the increase in social media usage, individuals are creating their life stories, and basing their identities, on labels. Dunne (2006) tells us that "the person's identity becomes a label, and, in turn, the label is their identity" (Dunne, 2006:5). Narrative therapist, Michael White, expressed concern over the possible harm a DSM diagnosis (i.e. label) may have on an individual's identity. Narradrama aids individuals in reevaluating and possibly rejecting, previous labels that have possibly played a role in forming their identities (Parsons, 2014).

Over the last decade, empirical studies of Narradrama have started emerging in peer-reviewed journals. These studies show the results of Narradrama interventions within both the older adult population, as well as adolescents. Several themes have emerged from these studies, including improvements in self-healing, self-image, self-love, self-acceptance, self-

efficacy, and self-identity (Afary and Alteet, 2022). This is in line with the research aims of this study.

8.4. Role Method Overview

8.4.1. Understanding Role

One of the central concepts of Drama Therapy, according to Robert Landy (1996), is that of role. The expansion of an individual's role repertoire allows them flexibility to move between roles. Role theory, within Drama Therapy, views mental health as this ability to move between a variety of roles whilst being comfortable to live with the paradoxes, contradiction, and ambivalence that those roles may express. Role is not viewed as a mere social facade or creation, but rather as a tangible form that is comprised of qualities that make up the various aspects of an individual (Landy, 1996). Role can be seen as a unit of culture, with the relationship between roles being viewed as one of the most significant developments within a cultural group. Human beings are role players and are characterised by whichever roles dominate their behaviour. Cultures too, are characterised by the success of the roles imposed on their members (Moreno, 2006).

Jacob Moreno (2006), the founder of psychodrama, states that role has its origin in drama, however, it cuts across all the sciences, such as anthropology, psychology, physiology, and sociology. He goes on further to say that role cannot be limited to the social realm alone. Rather, it must include the following three dimensions, which are in a constant stage of development:

- Psychosomatic roles, which express a physiological dimension. An example of this is the role of ‘the eater’, which stems back to characteristics possibly formed during the mother and infant eating process.
- Psychodramatic roles, which express a psychological dimension. Examples of these are role identification, mirroring, and role reversal which further mental growth.
- Social roles, which express a social dimension, such as the roles an individual plays when with his friends or enemies. These roles may come about based on how an individual sees themselves in social situations or based on roles an individual sees others playing. The social roles are the last to develop and are usually derived from the psychodramatic and psychosomatic roles.

  (Moreno, 2006)

In his paper entitled “The Dramatic World View Revisited: Reflections on the Roles Taken and Played by Young Children and Adolescents”, Landy (2008) tells us that the content of role is narrative – both a story told, and a story imagined. He goes on further to tell us that roles taken on in an individual’s early childhood experiences, are not eliminated from an individual's personality, but rather expanded or collapsed depending on the individual's needs (Landy, 2008).

Landy (2008) argues that there are three possible ways in which an individual learns, or develops, roles. These are as follows:

- Roles that pre-exist, either as dramatic artefacts or as roles that have existed and survived throughout history. If this is true, roles are inherited, and newborns could potentially have all possible archetypal roles within their psyches.

- Pre-existing cultural and societal roles that are both socially and culturally determined. If this is true, newborns will develop roles as they interact within both their social and their cultural worlds.
- Genetically inherited roles that exist as a means of survival. If this is true, newborns will have a predisposition that determines the types of roles they develop and how those roles play out.

  (Landy, 2008)

Regardless of what determining factors exist in role development, individuals remain, for the most part, the architects of their own identities. An individual must still select which roles fulfil their purposes and needs best; whether that is the need to survive, the need to express feelings, the need to be socially accepted, or the need to perform a task. Every time an individual takes on a role or plays out a role, they are creating a piece of their own identity (Landy, 2008). They are also fulfilling a social requirement, as playing a role only makes sense with reference to another person, making role a symptom of group dynamics (Meldrum, 1993). Certain roles may undergo certain changes in intensity, duration, and frequency, but will remain relatively stable throughout an individual's lifetime. Examples of such roles include the eater, the sleeper, and the thinker. Other roles, which may have once been central roles, cease to be so prominent. An example of such a role would be that of a protective parent, where the parents need to be protective is reduced as the child grows. If there is no shift in such a role it could bring conflict - in this example it would be conflict between parent and child (Moreno, 1987).

Robert Landy (1996), in his book “Persona and Performance”, talks about role as including the following characteristics:

“1) a unit personality;

2) a container of thoughts and feelings;

3) a personality concept;

4) a performed character in theatre;

5) a metaphor for social life;

6) a method of treatment in Drama Therapy.”

(Landy, 1996:8)

From a psychological perspective, an individual's ability to integrate a diverse and broad range of roles into their everyday life, is indicative of a positive identity. It makes sense then, that a therapeutic intervention which is aimed at assisting an individual to strengthen and formulate a positive identity, is primarily aimed at enabling an individual to manifest a multitude of roles. These may be roles that the individual has previously embodied in their lifetime, or an exploration of new roles (Keisari, 2021). Roles can function as a bridge between an individual's internal experiences and their external reality. In a Drama Therapy setting both the therapist and the client work in and through role. This provides an opportunity for healing as it enables a client to uncover a role structure that is deeply entrenched, and which ultimately determines an individual's behaviour. The ability to reorder that structure, and take control of functioning roles, whilst lessening the dysfunctional ones, allows for healing to occur (Landy, 1991a).

8.4.2. The paradox of Role

In his book entitled “Persona and Performance: The Meaning of Role in Drama, Therapy, and Everyday Life” Robert Landy (1996) describes how Drama Therapy integrates drama, therapy, and everyday life, with role being the central link amongst these three domains. At the very heart of dramatic experience lies paradox. An individual as actor lives in two diverse realities simultaneously. Some examples of these diverse realities are rehearsal and performance, spontaneity, and preparation, past and present, external and internal, actor and role, ordinary and extraordinary, me and not me. The most significant characteristic of dramatic paradox is the idea that an actor and a role remain separate yet somehow merged, and that the reality of the fictional role coexists with the reality of the non-fictional actor. This paradox speaks to the mystery and complexity of any dramatic practice (Landy, 1996).

Landy (1996) goes on to tell us that paradox and ambivalence are present in role too. This is referred to as role ambivalence and it can manifest in three different ways. Firstly, within the role itself if two opposing qualities clash. Secondly, between two conflicting roles. And lastly it can exist as an existential condition of being and not being. This last point suggests that individuals can tolerate, and negotiate through, paradox. It is human nature for individuals to seek balance and order in their lives, however, this cannot be fully realised until an individual is open to hearing oppositional standpoints. An individual needs to wrestle with their tendency to disturb the peace, in order for them to find a place of peace (Landy, 1996).

8.4.3. Role Theory

Jacob Moreno began his formulation of role theory in 1923, in which he suggested that all individuals are born role players and assume various roles from birth (Silverstein, 2011). This pluralistic theory of role posits that every individual plays multiple roles in their lives. These roles can be named, identified, modified, and reassessed when necessary. This theory further postulates that every role is a combination of social and individual factors, given that every individual is defined by both their cultural upbringing and past experiences. This combination results in roles being both psychological and social, which makes them an accessible agent of change in an individual's life (Jakovina and Jakovina, 2017).

According to Landy (2009), there are several assumptions at the core of role theory. The first is that by nature, individuals assume and act out roles. This is the capacity to see oneself as someone else and behave in that way. Another assumption is that an individual’s personality can be seen as an interactive role-playing system. According to role theory, human experience can be described in terms of distinct behavioural patterns that indicate a specific manner of feeling, thinking, or doing. One of these patterns is role. Despite having connections to other roles, every role is distinct in terms of its attributes, purpose, and fashion. A role is flexible and adaptable to the unique circumstances of each individual, rather than being a fixed entity (Landy, 2009).

In his article in the Journal of Arts Psychotherapy, Frydman (2016) states that role theory views role as a fundamental component of personality, which possesses traits that give it individuality and consistency. It is the repository for all the ideas and emotions that an individual has about themselves and other people in both their real and imagined worlds. Role is a personality unit that is a part of a whole, rather than the whole. Its existence

illustrates a single aspect of a larger whole, rather than offering a clear picture of an individual's personality. Individuals play a variety of roles, in which they need flexibility to retain a multifaceted understanding of life (Frydman, 2016).

Landy (2009) goes on to tell us that when an individual first starts Drama Therapy, the therapist, operating from the perspective of role theory, typically presumes that at least one role that the individual needs to play in their life is either not available, inadequately developed or not appropriately matched with other roles. The first goal of treatment is to assist the individual in identifying and accessing that role. The individual then performs, or tells a story, either verbally or nonverbally. This story will be an account of past, present, and future experiences in the individual's life. Presentational or representational storytelling can be used. With the role technique, the individual typically crafts a story that is fictitious, but it eventually turns into a mirror reflecting their real-life problems. A story cannot exist without a role, as every story needs a narrator and a possible audience (Landy, 2009).

Roles are both portable and accessible at all times, yet few individuals consider checking in with their inner cast of characters. Furthermore, an individual's role system is always changing based on the situation, the time, and the need. In Drama Therapy, a role is invoked by assisting an individual to explore and extract a need which requires examination. The purpose of this is to assist individuals to immediately focus on one aspect of their personalities. This then directs the individual to the cause of a problem that needs to be resolved (Landy, 1991b). Frydman states that counter roles are developed once distinct characteristics of a given role are demonstrated. Oftentimes, a different counter role than the one that was initially intended may be required. The diversity of roles makes up a total role system from which an individual can draw particular roles as needed. To maintain

mental health, an individual must realize that they are a collection of roles, rather than a single role, and that the more inviting and open they are to developing roles through counter role, the more options they provide themselves for a state of ambivalence to be achieved (Frydman, 2016).

It is not a simple task to increase our repertoire of roles because every individual learns a limited range of roles from the interactions in which they were raised. But according to Landy's paradigm, no role can exist in a vacuum; rather, because roles are inherently interwoven, each one contains features that are complementary, opposed, expanding, or reducing (Grinberg *et al.*, 2012).

8.4.4. Role Method

Role theory and Role Method in Drama Therapy are distinct, yet closely integrated. Role theory is an approach to understanding the beginnings, objectives, and processes of Drama Therapy. It is mostly derived from traditional healing forms of theatre; however, it also draws from the social sciences. As a result, it gives the field a primary and distinct focus - that of an art form followed by a science. As a theory, it provides a framework within which all other aspects of the research and clinical domains of Drama Therapy can be understood (Landy, 2009). Robert Landy developed Role Method as a framework for role theory within Drama Therapy. He agreed with Moreno's view of role as a unit of culture where the function of role is to enter into an individual’s unconscious world to bring order to it (Moreno, 1987). Landy also agreed with Moreno on the idea that individuals seek to expand their role repertoire (Grinberg *et al.*, 2012). According to Landy's viewpoint (2009), individuals naturally play a range of roles in their everyday lives. Individuals develop their unique set of roles as a result of interactions between their inner selves and people in the outside world. Accordingly, the

concept of the personality is described as a dynamic system of roles, each of which symbolizes a different part of the personality (Landy, 2009).

There is a triangle of characters in Role Method. The first character is the role itself, the second is the counter role, and the third is the guide. The term counter role refers to aspects of a role that may be disregarded, avoided, or overlooked in the continuous search for effective ways to perform a single role. It does not necessarily mean that a role is the antithesis of another, as good is to evil (Gervais, 2021). The guide serves as the link that joins role and counter role. Its primary purpose is to help an individual identify his or her own pathway, in order to integrate the two. The guide serves as a navigator who puts the traveller on the correct path and assists them in getting past roadblocks. The Drama Therapist usually acts as the guide (Grinberg *et al.*, 2012).

An absolute balance in the role system can never be entirely achieved according to Perez (2015). An individual's capacity to experience and express a greater number of roles results in a dynamic type of balance, which can be viewed as a healthy management of the construct. Because roles are interdependent, modifications made to one role will unavoidably have an impact on the role system as a whole (Perez, 2005). Landy (1996) argues that even though finding balance is typically what drives people, roles aren't always in harmony. An individual may feel under strain when their roles reach a conflict peak; this pressure may intensify to the point where the individual experiences severe anxiety. Extreme roles that were latent and undiagnosed may emerge under such a situation; conversely roles that are essential for growth may be activated either through the therapy process or as a result of a life crisis (Landy, 1996).

Role Method is an 8-step process as follows. These steps don't always follow a straight line.

1. “Invoking the role;
2. naming the role;
3. playing out/working through the role;
    - de-rolling, involving distancing from one role, entering a neutral position, and preparing to take on the counter role;
4. exploring alternative qualities in sub roles, or discovering a counter role;
    - de-rolling, moving fully out of the imaginary/fictional realm and preparing to reflect upon the fictions just created;
5. reflecting upon the role play: discovering role qualities functions and styles inherent in the role;
6. relating the fictional role to everyday life;
7. integrating roles to create a functional role system;
8. social modelling: discovering ways that client’s behaviour in role affects others in their social environments”

    (Landy, 2009:75)

According to Landy (2009), the reflexivity of steps five and six indicate that this approach has a cognitive component. When using Role Method, a Drama Therapist must be adaptable and responsive, interacting with individuals on a personal level. In general, the Drama Therapist acts as a guide, a coach, or a spectator, whilst keeping an aesthetic distance from the individual. The Drama Therapist ultimately encourages the individual to discover their own guide. The de-rolling steps identify the primary paradox of the dramatic experience (i.e. the me and not me). A fully de-rolled individual does not exist. There are masks beneath masks. The goal of de-rolling is to transition from the imaginary world to the real world for

the purpose of introspective and not to entirely transcend an individual's identity (Landy, 2009).

Being present for the individual in front of you is one of the most important acts for a therapist. The therapist has a solid framework to work within when they observe and take note of the important roles that create the full spectrum of life, that hold an individual back, or that help an individual cope. That process is facilitated by a role framework (Daniel, 2006). In order to ascertain the success of the treatment, Landy (2009) tells us that the therapist poses a number of questions.

1. Can the individual recognize a problematic role, accept it, and perform somewhat competently in it? Being competent entails applying one's understanding of the characteristics, purpose, and style of the role presentation in order to produce effective relationships with others whist in the role.
2. Can the individual recognize a counter role, assume it, and carry it out somewhat competently?
3. Can the individual locate a guide and utilize that persona to help them get through a difficult situation?
4. Can the individual reconcile roles that conflict with one another?
5. Can the individual assume and perform a variety of roles using the taxonomy of roles?

(Landy, 2009)

8.4.5. Role and Mask work

The mask appears frequently in literature, human development stages, history, and culture. The mask assumes human projections as an object in theatre, magic, ritual, and play. It can take on an endless range of shapes as a projection of the self, whether that of a human, heavenly animal, or inanimate object. Masks can be both literal and figurative. The masks an individual wears are created through their movements, facial expressions, and gestures. Masks can be alive – a living, seeing, hearing thing (Landy, 1985).

In his article titled “The image of the mask: Implications for theatre and therapy”, Landy (1985) states that a mask serves as the self-image in treatment. It is a minimal distance object as it becomes a part of the face when worn, however, because it is easily removed and discussed as a separate entity during therapy, it is more distancing than makeup. Working with masks can help an individual perceive their challenges more clearly due to this distance. By using a mask to hide an aspect of an individual personality that they do not like, or have repressed, therapy aims to unmask the self. Unmasking creates a change in reality from the world of drama, representation, or fiction, to the real world. There are masks for both realities. An individual can enter and exit a character at will in the fictional realm, but in the realm of actuality, reaching that degree of liberation requires significant work. In both theatre and therapy, the mask serves as a projective tool. It represents the transcendent aspect of the human being, the part that fights with ingrained fears and aspires to a more ideal life. The mask functions as a bridge between the real and imagined worlds, representing complete paradox (Landy, 1985).

8.4.6. Role and Identity

Due to their shared underlying frames of reference, identity (self) and behaviour have a complicated and reciprocal relationship. The framework an individual employs to evaluate their identity in any given circumstance, is the same framework they utilize to evaluate their own actions within that circumstance. The meaning of performance and identity is what informs this shared frame of reference. An individual's identity gives them a perspective through which to understand the social environment, as well as their own current or future behaviours (Burke and Reitzes, 1981).

According to Irwin in the article titled “Drama Therapy: Concepts, Theories and Practices” (1996), Landy conceptualizes self-identity in Drama Therapy through role. According to Landy's role theory, the self is viewed in terms of its roles, which are complex, partly derived from the social environment, and crucial to the development of an individual's personality. Living simultaneously in the paradoxical domains of mind and body, thought and action, subject and object, actor, and spectator, is a component of the human condition. The idea of the self as articulated by philosophers, theologians, poets, and humanistic psychologists is contested by Landy, who claims that viewing the concept of the self as true, monotheistic, and monolithic oversimplifies human experience. In a society where there are many options, one needs a method to consider or act out the various parts. Landy posits that one way is through role (Irwin, 1996).

Yarmarkov (2016) asserts that Landy views the ‘self’ as an individual identity that is complex, multifarious, responsive to challenging circumstances, and reflexive. It is capable of looking at and altering another aspect of the self. Landy's perspective on the ability of the self to change is significant, as it highlights the advantages of identity transformation.

Identity has an influence on role performance. When presented with an option to participate in an activity or a combination of activities, a decision needs to be taken. Decisions are influenced by identities. The choice made leads to an activity that aligns with, amplifies, and reflects an individual's identity (Yarmarkov, 2016).

In Drama Therapy, embodiment is the process by which the self is realized through and via the body. Consideration is given to the unconscious and conscious ways in which the body communicates (Jones, 1996). The body can be described as the principal means by which communication takes place between self and others. This is achieved through speech, emotion, and gesture (Elam, 1991). Phil Jones (1996) writes that an individual can move, speak, respond, and feel differently when they adopt a dramatic identity. As a result of the physical transformation, they may become free from their typical identity, codes, roles, and way of understanding themselves and their relationships with others. This sense of freedom can lead to new ways of being, acting, and connecting. It can give the individual the chance to relate experiences from their dramatic identity to their everyday lives. The individual's regular identity and daily life may change as a result of this experience (Jones, 1996). Dramatic improvisation and embodiment through role have been shown, in previous qualitative research, to hold transformational potential for the evolution of an individual’s life story (Keisari, 2021). In this way, Role Method can act as a tool for identity change.

9. Discussion/Data Analysis

Using Atlas ti, I was able to initiate over 250 open codes. The process of creating axial codes involved categorizing the open codes into comprehensive groups. The last step involved looking for the most dominant groups (or themes) that had emerged as well as the sub-themes (codes) that accompanied those dominant themes. This was the final step of selective coding. This section discusses how these findings relate to the research questions.

9.1. Answering the Research Questions

Two main research questions and three supplementary questions were the focus of this study. The first primary question is ‘In what way does social media impact the development of teenage identity?’ with the supplementary question “Can we draw links between the various projected selves on social media and the authenticity of the internal self?’. The second primary question was ‘What aspects of Role Method and Narradrama are most effective in assisting teenagers to develop congruent self-identity?’, with the supplementary questions being ‘In what way does role repertoire assist teenagers in identifying incongruent roles and allow for an exploration of more congruent roles?’ and ‘In what ways does Narradrama support teenagers in creating new narratives around their authentic selves?’ After conducting the analysis, I believe that the most logical way for me to go about answering these questions is by answering the supplementary questions first and then the primary questions.

9.1.1. Can we draw links between the various projected selves on social media and the authenticity of the internal self?

The projected self is an individual's outward appearance, often contradicting their internal self which reflects their beliefs, values, motivations, and goals. The projected self protects vulnerable aspects of our persona. The literature shows that the most prominent theme relating to this is that of psychological aspects. These are related to an individual's mind and thoughts. In other words, an individual's ability to maintain the authenticity of their internal self, whilst projecting an outward persona, depends on the ability to control their thoughts. There are several sub-themes that fall under the theme of psychological aspects. These include self-awareness, self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-image, self-perception self-love and self-concept. This indicates that the stronger an individual's sense of self is, the more likely they are going to be able to maintain their congruent self – especially whilst engaging in online activities. Seeing as individuals often struggle with their sense of self during the teenage years, it is understandable how they may begin to develop incongruent identities at this stage of life.

9.1.2. In what way does social media impact the development of teenage identity?

To answer this question accurately, it's important to look at this researcher's definition of identity given in the glossary. In short, identity is understood as the stories an individual tells themselves and the consequent roles they play. In response to this research question, digital behaviour was one of the strongest themes that emerged from the literature (Atlas ti, 2024). The way in which teenagers behave when making use of digital platforms, specifically social media, has a tremendous impact on their identity. The sub-themes that emerged under this category were cyber-addiction, peer influence, social approval, cyberbullying and hate speech, labelling and cyberchondria, perception change, and social comparison. All of these

confirmed the original research assumption that social media can, and does, impact teenage identity.

Not only does the literature overwhelmingly show that identity in teens is impacted by social media, but it goes further to show that most of this influence is negative. Cyber-addiction talks to the physiological changes that social media has on an individual's brain patterns whilst perception change addresses the psychological changes that come about as a result of social media. Social approval, social comparison and peer influence speak to the natural desire that teenagers have to fit in, that is heightened due to the invasive nature of the digital world. Cyberbullying and hate speech as well as labelling and cyberchondria lead to mental health issues as a direct result of the digital realm.

There are, of course, positive impacts too that emerged as sub-themes. These were information seeking behaviour, networking, and improved communication. Information seeking behaviour allows for an individual to become curious and inquiring. Networking opens up an individual to possibilities or communities that they would not usually encounter in their day to day lives. This can have a tremendous effect on their identity as they may finally feel that they are accepted and fit in. Improved communication may, for example, help a shy, introverted individual become slightly more confident and outspoken.

Based on the primary theme and sub-themes that emerged in the literature, I feel confident concluding that social media does, indeed, impact the identities of teenagers that make use of it.

9.1.3. In what way does role repertoire assist teenagers in identifying incongruent roles and allow for an exploration of more congruent roles?

The strongest theme that emerged from this section, was that of the psychological processes involved in role exploration (Atlas ti, 2024). The psychological processes include embodiment, risk-taking, emotional expression, perception clarification and relationships. Engaging in role play requires that an individual takes risks and is willing to embody a role. Role play inevitably includes the ability to engage in a relationship with other role players. The ability to do this in an emotionally expressive, open, dynamic, and constructive way is key to successful role playing and, importantly, the clarification of an individual's perceptions. It is this clarification of perception that has the potential to enable an individual to identify any incongruent roles that they are playing, and it is the willingness to take risks and embody alternative roles that allows an individual to expand the role repertoire – thus enabling more congruent roles to be discovered and explored. Self-transformation and identity change are made possible through role identification, role development and role performance.

9.1.4. In what ways does Narradrama support teenagers in creating new narratives around their authentic selves?

The theme of meaning-making was the strongest theme to emerge from the literature regarding an individual's life-story and Narradrama. There were several sub-themes too, namely metaphor, externalisation, unique outcomes, role exploration and alternative interpretations. It is a teenager's life story, which has developed over the course of their lifetime, and which has had any experiences that do not fit the problem-saturated narrative filtered out, that needs to be addressed and reauthored. Narradrama has the potential to enable a teenager to reauthor their life story by addressing the problem-saturated story. The

process of narrative re-authoring requires several key elements, all of which necessitate meaning-making to be effective.

Metaphor is necessary because it allows for distance from the issue to be obtained, thus allowing an individual to explore the issue without being overwhelmed by it. The ability to explore the issue is what can assist an individual to see things from a different perspective. Externalisation too also allows for a shift in perspective by showing an individual that they are not the problem, but rather that the problem is something separate to them. This shift in the way an individual views the problem allows for an exploration of alternative interpretations of the issue. In exploring alternative possibilities, unique outcomes come into play. Unique outcomes represent the occasions when experiences that do not fit the problem-saturated narrative have been filtered out and overlooked. When working through these unique outcomes, role exploration can be crucial to reauthoring the narrative.

9.1.5. What aspects of Role Method and Narradrama are most effective in assisting teenagers to develop congruent self-identity?

As discussed above, there are several aspects of both Narradrama and Role Method that are effective in assisting teenagers to develop congruent self-identities, particularly with reference to the re-authoring of life-stories, as well as the expansion of role repertoires. In addition to the themes that have already been discussed, further overall themes emerged from the literature, namely creative expression, experiential learning, and self-reflection. I will discuss these separately.

Creative expression: This allows for both positive and negative emotions to be released in a safe and cathartic environment where individuals are encouraged to delve into their innermost beings. Creative expression promotes self-awareness and self-development as individuals can become fully immersed in the process. It also promotes critical thinking as it has the capacity to view an issue from multiple angles (Luskin, 2023). All of these qualities are instrumental in both Narradrama and Role Method and play an integral part in the congruent identity development process of teenagers.

Experiential learning: This is a fundamental aspect of both Narradrama and Role Method. Experiential learning allows individuals the opportunity to be creative, to better grasp concepts that they are engaging with, and to reflect on those concepts. In addition to improving individuals' knowledge and abilities, experiential learning aims to pique their emotional interest and teach them not to be afraid of making mistakes, but rather to value and learn from them (Stuart, 2024). By playing an active role in both the Narradrama and Role Method processes, teenagers would be better able to solidify and incorporate that which they are experiencing and learning.

Self-reflection: A corner stone of any Drama Therapy intervention is that of self-reflection, which is a crucial component of self-development. It allows an individual to focus on areas for improvement and development by evaluating their strengths and shortcomings. Without the potential change that self-reflection brings, an individual will continue to run into the same issues they have always encountered. Self-reflection can help increase an individual's self-awareness, sense of control and communication skills. It can also lead to better decision-making skills and greater personal accountability (Gupta, 2023). Most importantly for congruent identity formation, self-reflection helps an individual grasp what they truly

believe in and why; thus, ensuring that their words and actions are in line with their core values and beliefs. Ultimately this leads to lowering cognitive dissonance (the uneasiness felt when actions conflict with moral principles) and thereby, a more congruent sense of self.

10. Conclusion

All teenagers need to identify goals in life and establish their own set of personal norms, values, and beliefs. The teenage years are marked by profound reflection and self-examination. This self-evaluation process culminates in long-term goal setting to achieve social and emotional independence. It is what transforms a teenager into an adult. This is a challenging process from both a psychological and educational standpoint because teenagers need to develop a sense of their own identity and establish how they fit into the world. This is usually accomplished through relationships with other people - such as the community they live in, the educational institution they attend, their closest friends, the religion they practice, their cultural group, etc. More and more, the interactions and relationships that they have on social media are playing a vital role in the development of their identities. This can often lead to incongruent identity formation as teenagers struggle to fit in with who and what they are exposed to in the digital world.

Drama Therapy is an active, experiential, and embodied form of therapy that enables clients to explore their inner selves through dramatic enactments and techniques. It has its roots in psychodrama, developed by Jacob Moreno in the 1920s. The first use of the term "Dramatherapy" was in the UK by Peter Slade in the 1930s. Drama Therapists use various theatre processes and activities to help clients achieve their therapeutic goals. Both drama and therapy involve risk-taking and multi-layered exercises, which can both instil trust and evoke resistance. Drama Therapy uses drama to heal mental health concerns by connecting individuals to their feelings, conscious and unconscious thoughts, and communities, thereby strengthening healing connections. To achieve this, Drama Therapists use nine core processes: dramatic projection, empathy, role playing, personification and impersonation, interactive audience, embodiment, playing, life-drama connection, and transformation. Drama Therapy provides a context for individuals to share their stories, express emotions,

problem-solve, set goals, and achieve catharsis. By encouraging clients to assume different roles and dramatize alternative stories, Drama Therapy fosters creation through embodiment, using all senses for the expansion of an individual’s experience and clarification of their perception. Drama Therapy can aid in the shift from negative to positive identity formation using active methods such as role play and improvisation.

Narradrama is a client-centred approach that combines Drama Therapy with creative processes, focusing on story-centred techniques and empowering individuals to explore their personal, psychological, and social concerns. It allows for story expansion through various techniques, drawing upon an individual's body, mind, and senses. Narradrama is particularly appealing to adolescents as it avoids power dynamics and aims to free individuals from social or personal limitations through creative expression and role expansion. It includes several key concepts which it has borrowed from narrative therapy, including Outsider Witnesses, Double Listening, Re-Membering Conversations, and Reauthoring. Reauthoring opens up narratives to alternative interpretations, either related to actions or identity. Performative assimilation of the developing re-authored story has been shown to restore affective function within the brain by reducing the dominance of the problem-saturated story.

Narradrama is a therapy approach that focuses on the externalization of an individual's problem-saturated story, allowing them to revise their relationship with it and open up new opportunities. The process involves eight flexible and non-hierarchical steps. The techniques used in Narradrama include externalisation, role-play and improvisation, internalized other interviewing and active role interviewing, deconstruction and reconstruction of the alternative story, identifying and dramatizing unique outcomes, and action-oriented interventions for remembering conversations. These techniques help

individuals make the invisible become visible, allowing for numerous perspectives to be viewed. Emotional catharsis can be triggered through the enactment and reliving of life experiences, which can help individuals overcome their problem-saturated story and find new ways to cope with their situation.

Role theory and Role Method in Drama Therapy are distinct yet closely integrated approaches. Role theory is derived from traditional healing forms of theatre and social sciences, providing a framework for understanding the field's research and clinical domains. Role Method is a framework for role theory within Drama Therapy. In Role Method, there is a triangle of characters: the role itself, the counter role, and the guide. The counter role refers to aspects of a role that may be overlooked or ignored in the search for effective ways to perform a single role. The guide serves as the link between the role and the counter role, helping an individual identify their own pathway to integrate them. The therapist often plays the role of guide. It is important that the therapist is adaptable and responsive, interacting with individuals on a personal level whilst maintaining a professional distance from the individual.

An absolute balance in the role system cannot be entirely achieved, as individuals' capacity to experience and express a greater number of roles results in a dynamic type of balance. Changes made to one role will unavoidably impact the role system as a whole. Landy argues that roles are not always in harmony, and extreme roles may emerge under such situations, while roles essential for growth may be activated either through the therapy process or as a result of a life crisis. The Role Method is an 8-step process, which includes invoking the role, naming the role, playing out/working through the role, de-rolling, exploring alternative qualities in sub roles, moving fully out of the imaginary/fictional realm, reflecting upon the

role play, relating the fictional role to everyday life, integrating roles to create a functional role system, and social modelling. Expanding an individual's role repertoire can help them find alternatives to the roles that they are stuck in and that are causing them distress. Role play is a core process that helps individuals express their emotions, expand their awareness, and discover alternative roles that make up their identity.

This study aimed to investigate the impact of social media on teenage identity development, and the tools provided by Narradrama and Role Method to help teenagers navigate potential incongruences. The research found that the internal self, which reflects an individual's beliefs, values, motivations, and goals, is influenced by psychological aspects such as self-awareness, self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-concept. It can be significantly impacted in a negative way by social media, particularly through cyber-addiction, peer influence, seeking of social approval, cyberbullying, labelling, and social comparison. Positive impacts were also identified, such as information seeking behaviour, networking, and improved communication.

Role repertoire and Narradrama are Drama Therapy processes that can facilitate the identification of incongruent roles and the exploration of more congruent ones with teenagers. Role exploration involves embodiment, risk-taking, emotional expression, perception clarification, and relationships. Engaging in role play requires taking risks and embodying a role, which can lead to self-transformation and identity change. Narradrama supports teenagers in creating new narratives around their authentic selves through meaning-making, metaphor, externalisation, unique outcomes, role exploration, and alternative interpretations. Role exploration is crucial for reauthoring narratives. Both Role Method and Narradrama are effective in helping teenagers develop congruent self-identities, through the process of re-authoring life-stories and expanding role repertoires.

11. Implications for Future Research

A connection has been found between social media and potential incongruent identity formation in teenagers. This opens up the need for further research into the ways that the potentially negative aspects of this, such as poor self-esteem and self-diagnosed labelling, can be counteracted.

A strong connection between the ability of Narradrama and Role Method, to help teenagers reauthor, reimagine and reevaluate their internal stories about self, has been found. Further empirical research is needed to validate or refute these findings.

12. Challenges and Limitations of Study

I have attempted to be thorough in my review of the available literature, however, Drama Therapists are not known to write prolifically about their work after they have qualified (Korde, Šuriņa and Mārtinsone, 2023), preferring instead to work on a very practical level. This has created a shortage of literature to review regarding the practical applications of Narradrama and Role Method in the context of this research paper**.**

A second limitation of this study is the fact that it is purely theoretical at this stage. It is necessary for practical research to take place in order to test the findings of this paper. As George Patterson says in his book on Clinical Interventions (2018), all theoretical intervention outcomes are provisional until they are empirically tested (Patterson, 2018).

Lastly, this study has been limited to using English literature only. I made an attempt to include literature from different countries and different socio-economic groups in order to close the gap in my personal experience of the research phenomenon, however, the inability to include research written in a language other than English may have prohibited me from achieving this, leading to the possible exclusion of a great body of work that potentially has implications for the findings of this study.

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