

THE POWER OF RECREATIONAL READING: YOUTH DEVELOPING THROUGH
“THE GIVER”

A Thesis

by

ELIZABETH SUZANNE BREEN

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| Chair of Committee, | Brandy N. Kelly Pryor |
| Committee Members, | Corliss Outley |
| | Elizabeth Robinson |
| Head of Department, | Gary Ellis |

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ABSTRACT

As youth development researchers and practitioners, it is important to understand various developmental elements that youth experience as well as the recreational activities that fuel their growth and development. A growing problem among youth in the United States is aliteracy, those who are literate but choose not to participate in recreational reading. The growing popularity of dystopian novels being featured in the media, may affect the rate of recreational reading. Since the debut of *The Hunger Games* movie, dystopian movie production has flourished including the production of the *Divergent* series, *The Maze Runner*, and *The Giver*. The film adaptation and the book series, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins has become one of the largest grossing feature films and series. With this amount of media attention, youth are bound to have interest in what the dystopian genre entails. There is a lack of research on the developmental benefits of youth reading dystopian type novels. The purpose of this study was to investigate how recreational reading of dystopian novels, like *The Giver*, benefits the development of young adult readers. Using qualitative methods, the researcher conducted several focus groups with undergraduate aged participants. An interview guide was used to conduct the focus group discussion asking questions in affiliation with *The Giver*, the Six C's of Positive Youth Development framework, and the Reader Response Theory. The results were obtained by coding the transcripts and discovering themes. The findings suggest that as youth develop, their experience with literature develops, resulting in increased levels of competence, confidence, character,

connection, caring, and contribution. These results are valuable to share with youth and youth development practitioners in order to decrease aliteracy rates and share the power of recreational reading.

DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate my research to a man who taught me that learning and reading are lifelong adventures, to my grandfather, Billy Robert Mayse, may my memories with you never fade away.

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I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Brandy Kelly Pryor for all of your encouragement, guidance, and support. You have truly shown me that I am capable of doing anything that I set my heart on. Thank you to Dr. Corliss Outley and Dr. Elizabeth Robinson for being an unbelievably supportive network to my committee and for providing opportunities to challenge me to become a better student.

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Thank you to my parents and my family for being my biggest support and for encouraging me every step of the way. To my sweet Harlow girl, thank you for always putting a smile on my face and for your constant love. I also would like to acknowledge Lois Lowry and the wonderful worlds she has created in which I find comfort.

“Young people handle dystopia every day: in their lives, their dysfunctional families, their violence-ridden schools. They watch dystopian television and movies about the real world where firearms bring about explosive conclusions to conflict. Yes, I think they need to see some hope for such a world. I can’t imagine writing a book that doesn’t have a hopeful ending.”

-Lois Lowry-

NOMENCLATURE

| | |
|---------|--|
| PYD | Positive Youth Development |
| YAL | Young Adult Literature |
| Six C's | Positive Youth Development Framework (Competence, Confidence, Character, Connection, Compassion/Caring and Contribution) |

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| ABSTRACT | ii |
| DEDICATION | iv |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | v |
| NOMENCLATURE | vi |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | vii |
| CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Background | 3 |
| Synopsis of <i>The Giver</i> | 4 |
| Conceptual Framework | 6 |
| CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW | 12 |
| History of Young Adult Literature | 12 |
| History of Dystopian Literature | 14 |
| Elements of Motivation | 15 |
| Elements of Relationship Building & Connectedness | 18 |
| Elements of Escapism & Power of Reading | 20 |
| Conclusions | 21 |
| CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY | 23 |
| Focus Groups | 23 |
| Setting | 24 |
| Population and Recruiting | 24 |
| Design | 26 |
| Procedure/Details of Focus Groups | 27 |
| Analysis | 29 |
| Data Validation | 29 |
| Conclusions | 30 |
| CHAPTER IV RESULTS | 31 |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Reader Journeys | 31 |
| Development Through Six C's..... | 37 |
| Conclusions | 55 |
| | |
| CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS..... | 57 |
| | |
| Discussions..... | 57 |
| Major Findings & Future Research..... | 60 |
| Limitations | 62 |
| Conclusions | 64 |
| | |
| REFERENCES | 65 |
| | |
| APPENDIX A | 70 |

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Just for a minute think about how much power literature has in our world right now and the potential it has to reach even further. Maybe this book title will help aid in seeing this potential: *Harry Potter*. These two words are not only a book title, they are a name, a main character, blockbuster hits that have topped the charts, a series of stories enjoyed by old and young readers, and a title that holds an enormous sense of connectedness. Potter is a global empire (Gunelius, 2008).

As a youth development researcher and practitioner, it is important to understand various developmental elements that youth experience as well as the recreational activities that fuel their growth and development. A youth practitioner's role is to ensure that youth are provided with supports, opportunities, and services that support in their development. This research study focused on one particular recreational experience, the activity of recreational reading. I used the term *recreational reading* as defined by Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007), "the reading students choose to do on their own... it involves personal choice, what one wants to read" (pg. 22).

Recreational activities among youth usually have active components of adventure, escape, and relaxation (Kleiber, Caldwell, & Shaw, 1993). Recreational reading is thought to contain such elements like escape, and relaxation but it is not often thought to be an active form of leisure. This research study investigated this idea among others, that recreational reading can be considered an active form of leisure.

In 2010, Scholastic, the world's largest children's book publisher, published their

Kids & Family Reading Report (2010), which contained data on how reading habits have changed during the digital age. Scholastic reported that as a child ages and matures, the time spent recreationally reading decreases, and time spent online increases. This research study provides valuable support that recreational reading is still a vital activity for older and mature youth in the 18-25 age range. Recreational reading can and still does have positive impacts on older generations of youth.

Today, teachers are feeling so pressured with time to help prepare their students for state mandated exams that time for recreational reading in the classroom is becoming non-existent (Manning, Aliefendie, Chiarelli, Haas, & Williams, 2012; McKool, 2007). The less a student reads, the more difficulties he/she has learning and connecting to new information (Manning et. al., 2012). According to the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy (hereinafter referred to as BBFFL), students usually take their first state mandated benchmark test in 3rd grade and if these students are not meeting their grade level of reading, these students are less likely to receive high school diplomas (BBFFL, 2014; Wilhelm & Smith, 2014).

Reading motivation has another barrier called aliteracy, knowing how to read but choosing not to (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Those who are aliterate only read and write when it is absolutely necessary (Agee, 2005). According to Beers (1996), the motivation behind aliteracy is often assumed and there is a gap in the research of student's perspectives on why they participate in aliteracy. This research study explores both sides of student's motivation, to read or not to read.

Ultimately, low levels of reading affect the quality and quantity of life with

contributing factors such as an increase of unemployment rates, an increase of health disparities, and a decrease of income rates (BBFFL, 2014; Lysaker, 2011). These factors negatively affect our country's economy and the well being of our society's greatest asset, our youth (BBFFL, 2014; Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Literacy is an integral part to our culture, our prosperity, and the advancement of our society (Wilhelm & Smith, 2014).

In the remainder of this chapter I will provide a background that will explain the foundation used in this study. The background includes a synopsis of *The Giver*, and a description of the conceptual frameworks used in the study including, the Positive Youth Development framework, the Six C's of Positive Youth Development, and the Reader Response Theory.

Background

The purpose of this study was to investigate how recreational reading of dystopian novels, like *The Giver*, benefit the development of young adult readers by using the Six C's of youth development and the Reader Response Theory as frameworks. After rereading *The Giver*, during my first semester of graduate school, I was reminded of the power that recreational reading has had on my development as a communicator, an independent thinker, and a student. I realized that the broken society in this novel is particularly similar to my own society in various ways. Our society has certain rules and standards that we follow but we also have the freedom to explore within those guidelines.

Jonas, the main character, is faced with many challenges and questions that I

believe youth face today: *Where do I belong in my own society? What is my role in this society? Will this role stay the same forever or will it change?* Like Jonas, these are all questions that I had while growing and developing, and sparked my attention into wondering if other youth connect to dystopian novels the way I did.

After describing this phenomenon to one of my professors, we determined that the ways in which I developed were closely associated with one of the 6 elements of Positive Youth Development (PYD). The Six C's of the PYD framework stand for competence, confidence, character, connection, caring and contribution (Lerner, Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, Phelps, & Gestsdottir, et. al., 2005). I feel that I grew most in the way of connection because Jonas and the Giver defined diversity in a similar way that I do. Diversity not only describes someone's background and heritage but it also includes his/her emotions, reactions, and experiences. Diversity also is seen extrinsically through color, music, and art. I grew up having this understanding of diversity because of my unique family make up and I was able to connect with Jonas because he too, learns to understand diversity at a young age. I am curious to see if youth who read *The Giver* develop in this way and the other five C's-- competence, confidence, character, caring, and contribution. This study explored how recreational reading has affected the development of in youth of the emerging adulthood category and their development of the Six C's through this recreational activity.

Synopsis of *The Giver*

The Giver was written by Lois Lowry and published by Random House Children's Books in 1993. *The Giver* is considered a piece of dystopian fiction because

the society is formed around an absence of memory, including an absence of things like war, pain, happiness, and love. Lowry didn't intend for the novel to be classified as science fiction but the society's lack of humanity simply forced it into this category (Ulaby & Lowry, 2014).

According to Ulaby and Lowry (2014), Lowry wrote the book as a realistic piece with the intention of following the young protagonist, Jonas, as he tries to make sense of a complicated world. Inspired by her father's memory loss, Lowry created a novel with a society in which human memory was altered so that the community wouldn't have to remember the pain from the past. The society grew into a place with a complicated set of rules to provide a safe and secure community for its' members. Each member has a role in the society. These roles include assignments like teachers, caretakers of the young and the old, and nutrition specialist. Each member of the society is assigned to a job at the age of 12 in a ceremony, properly called the ceremony of the twelves.

The receiver of memory is a job assignment held by only one society member. This role is the highest ranked assignment and its' responsibilities entail what the name suggests. This individual holds the memories of the past. Only this one person knows what pain, war, color, and love feels like and looks like. The receiver of memory uses his knowledge of memories to consult the committee of Elders when issues arise in the community. The receiver of memory is held accountable to essentially make sure that history does not repeat itself and that all choices made will positively affect the society.

Jonas, the main character in *The Giver*, is assigned the honorary selection to be the next Receiver of Memory during his ceremony of the twelves. Throughout his job

training, Jonas discovers that his society is missing out on the memories of the past and he works with the Giver in order to return those missing memories back to his society. *The Giver* is a story that enables its readers to reflect on what values are important to them and their society.

Conceptual Framework

Positive Youth Development

Research on youth has grown tremendously over the past century. Steinberg and Lerner (2004) report that research on adolescence has been performed in three different stages over time. Steinberg and Lerner stated that in the early 20th century, G. Stanley Hall, a psychologist and educator, started the idea of researching adolescence. Steinberg and Lerner reported that Hall's research focused on the idea of not only did a human's development begin in the embryonic stage but it also continued past the prenatal period and into behavioral development. According to Steinberg and Lerner, throughout the next 70 years much of the academic research on adolescence centered on theories and models, but much of the experimental research was not based off of theoretical modeling at all. Steinberg and Lerner argued that this caused a wide gap in the research on adolescence.

Steinberg and Lerner (2004) explain that the second phase of research on adolescence began from the work of the psychologist, Piaget. Steinberg and Lerner reported that although Piaget did not specifically focus on the development of the adolescent but rather he focused on how various elements influence the wider picture of development. Piaget explained that biological, emotional, personality, social, and

societal experiences all have an influence on understanding (Piaget, 1952). Steinberg and Lerner described that Piaget's research ultimately led a movement to build a bridge between academic research and empirical research.

Beginning in the 1970's, the second phase of research on adolescence focused on describing the different development processes that adolescences go through (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004). According to Steinberg and Lerner (2004), these descriptions focused on how to solve problems within development. Throughout the next 20 years, Steinberg and Lerner (2004) describe that research on adolescences focused on four main areas. Steinberg and Lerner argue that these areas focused on the understanding that development happens from the interaction between adolescents and their environments, adolescents can be their own agent in development, an adolescent's power of influence can be extremely positive or extremely negative on their development, and research on adolescents is an idyllic time within human development to study the foundations of positive human development.

According to Steinberg and Lerner (2004), the first three areas of research turned the field of research on adolescents to be more of a how can we fix the youth of today and how can we alter youth's lives in order to increase positive development. Steinberg and Lerner suggest that the fourth area of research is what is most practiced today. Steinberg and Lerner continued to explain that adolescents are viewed more as assets within communities rather than viewed as individuals that need to be fixed. This idea that adolescents are valuable community agents lead into the framework of PYD, which

showcases how youth can positively develop from supports, opportunities, and services (Steinberg & Lerner, 2004).

Emerging Adulthood

Before going into the Six C's of PYD, I believe that it is important to discuss how the development of research on youth has distinguished distinct age categories among youth. A youth develops through several phases from baby to adulthood. The participants of this study are in the emerging adulthood category, which are 18-25 years old. According to the psychologist, Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (2007), individuals in the emerging adulthood age category are learning what it means to be an adult in the world. Arnett explains that these young adults are exploring their identities, post-high school lives, new responsibilities, and possibilities.

This study focuses on a specific set of emerging adults, those who are enrolled in a university. In the future, this study could explore many different sets of emerging adults and their development from recreational reading and then compare the study results.

Six C's of Positive Youth Development

The Six C's of PYD started off only as 5 c's in its' early development. These 5 c's (Caring/Compassion, Competence, Character, Connection, Confidence) were originally in a model of national youth policy used to show how various institutions, and programs and policies could aid youth in order to promote social justice, contribute to civil society and obtain greater equity in the American society (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000). The 6th, Contribution, was added to the model as an element that can

be exercised once the 5 c's have been obtained (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Youth who are thriving to positive adulthood will have the tools and experience necessary to learn and embrace their individuality, to aid their family, their community, and their civil society (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). Contribution includes things such as taking on leadership positions in partnering with community or developing skills to help the overall network of a community (Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003).

The outcomes of this model are very similar to the outcomes of increased recreational reading time among youth. With increased rates of literacy and increased participation in recreational reading, youth gain self-confidence, improve their comprehension levels, and heighten their leadership skills (Cremin, 2007; Kaufmann & Libby, 2012; BBFFL, 2014). I felt it was important to use this model of PYD to analyze the results of my focus groups because of its similarity with the outcomes of recreational reading; the analysis will be discussed later.

The interview guide in this study included discussion topics that pertained to all of the 5 original C's and the 6th C and the Six C's were utilized in the coding of the data. I included the 6th C because of the gravity that contribution has in *The Giver*. The society in the novel is built greatly on contribution. Each member of the community has a dedicated role that allows the society to flow without any disruption. There are a variety of jobs assigned but there is only one Receiver of Memory for the entire community. Jonas, the main character in the novel, is selected to be the new Receiver of Memory when he turns 12 and he will have the sole responsibility of keeping the

memories of the past (Lowry, 1993). He is looked at as the largest stakeholder in the society because if the memories are not held, the society will go back to ways of the past, resulting in destruction of the society (Lowry, 1993).

Reader Response Theory

While this study could have been done with just using the Six C's as a framework, I felt it was important to also include the Reader Response Theory. Using both frameworks allowed me to solidify a bond between the social sciences and the humanities. I was also able to have a linking foundation for my interview guideline between the reader and the text.

According to Rosenblatt (1968), the Reader Response Theory focuses on the reader's reaction of the text as opposed to analyzing the text or content of the book. Rosenblatt argues that a reader's personal history and his/her relationship with literature can affect his/her response and interpretation of the text. Rosenblatt even states that every reader's response to a text is different because of his/her background, beliefs, and experiences. Grenby and Reynolds (2011) also added that a reader's response can depend on the reader's personality traits, present needs, preoccupations, and current mood. Readers also find that through discussing the text, they were able to evaluate their personal development and their identities as individuals (Bean & Moni, 2003).

The Reader Response Theory allows a researcher to dig deep into the reader's experience. Grenby and Reynolds (2011) argue that the reading experience is an internal and invisible exchange between the reader and the text on the page. According to Grenby and Reynolds the Reader Response Theory enables researchers to see both sides

of story telling, the act of telling the story and the way the story is perceived. My interview guide contained questions that allowed my focus group participants to reflect upon the act of the story, and the way they interpreted the story. The interview guide also allowed participants to reflect upon their individual histories and their experiences as a reader. My participants' backgrounds have allowed me to see how their development has affected their identity as a reader as well as a background for their reactions to *The Giver*. This background information can be found in the section titled Reader's Journeys.

In chapter one I have presented an introduction and a background of this study. The background section included a synopsis of *The Giver* and the conceptual framework of this study. The conceptual framework included an explanation of PYD and youth research, the age category of emerging adulthood, the Six C's of PYD, and the Reader Response Theory. In the following chapters I will review past literature, explain the methodology of this research study, discuss the results from the study, and provide conclusions from the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study investigates the ways in which dystopian novels and the act of recreational reading has allowed young adults to develop competence, confidence, character, connection, caring/compassion, and contribution. In order to recognize the significance that recreational reading has had in the development of 18-25 aged youth, it is important to understand the history of young adult literature (hereinafter YAL) and the history of the dystopian genre. First, this literature review explores the history of YAL, and the history of the dystopian genre. Next, it explains how young adult readers are motivated, how literature allows readers to build relationships and connections, and finally how young adult readers use literature as an escape. I will also discuss how there is a lack of research on emerging adults and the benefits recreational reading has on their development as well as the lack of research on how specific genres can aid in this positive development.

History of Young Adult Literature

Until the late 18th century, children and youth were considered younger adults that needed more assistance than older adults (Hallett & Karasek, 2011). Nilsen and Donelson (2001) reported that the majority of literature that was read by children and young adults came from a religious background. Nilsen and Donelson argued that the text was universal between children, young adults, and adults. Both authors explained that the text focused on how youth should behave as responsible societal members and centered on didactics.

19th century literature reinforced gender roles, children as a subgroup, and domestic obligations (Bushman & Haas, 2006). These reinforcements allowed literature to be marketed to various readers such as children, women, and men. Hallett and Karasek (2011) explained that the emergence of children as a distinct group of society and the emergence of gender roles in society, inspired children's book publishing as a business. Nilsen and Donelson (2001) reported that the market for these books mainly started from children attending Sunday school. Nilsen and Donelson said that children would attend Sunday school for religious education as well as education that revolved around mathematics, English, history and job-related skills. Hallett and Karasek reported that the subject matter of these books focused around traditional oral tales and contained morally based lessons. The idea of utopia was introduced in these tales and has since made its appearance in children's and YAL (Zipes, 2003).

Bushman and Haas (2006) reported that literature of the early to mid 1900's focused on customary social behavior and contemporary YAL made its debut in the 1960's. Bushman and Haas argued that controversial topics such as love, drinking, and smoking entered into the world of literature, and from then literature featured more realistic details, which represented current economic and social problems of the time. Realistic fiction contains characters, plots, and settings that could feasibly have occurred (Short, Lynch-Brown, & Tomlinson, 2014). One of the first works of realistic fiction for young adults was *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton (Cart, 2001). At just 15 years old, Hinton (1967) wrote this coming of age story about two groups divided by their socioeconomic status and their journeys of facing life challenges. Young readers

devoured this novel because the story was written from the view of a young person and the readers were able to relate to the characters' age group and experiences (Cart, 2001).

According to Hallett and Karasek (2011), competing publishers grew and various genres began to surface during the late 19th century to the mid 20th century. Hallett and Karasek found that science fiction and mystery were among the most popular and today, literature for young adults reflects current social behaviors as well as allows young adults to relate their lives to the stories.

History of Dystopian Literature

Historically, *Utopia* written by Sir Thomas More (1516) is considered the birthplace of the word utopia. More described the word utopia is derived from two different Greek words, *eutopia* and *outopia*, meaning 'good place' and 'no place'. More claimed that utopia is a place with perfect political and societal states, something that can never be accomplished. While utopia contains imaginative and idealistic values, a dystopia contains complete opposition (Zipes, 2003).

In the forward of *Utopian and Dystopian Writing for Children and Young Adults*, Jack Zipes (2003) suggested that the dystopian genre of YAL is stemmed from the philosophy of Ernst Bloch. Zipes argued that Bloch's philosophy implied that utopian settings stem from our real life experiences and the longing to improving our way of life to gain what we do not have. According to Zipes, this philosophy suggested that by wishing what we do not have into a piece of work, we gain hope and confidence for change and reform in our own society. But Zipes argued that utopias are not realistic to obtain because of unintended consequences that turn a utopia into dystopia. A dystopian

setting contains corruption, violence, disease, and misery (Wilhelm, Smith, & Fransen, 2014). *The Giver* is considered dystopian fiction because the setting in this novel “takes on a negative cultural trend” or rather blocks both positive and negative trends thus, leading to absence dominating every aspect of the society.

Other contemporary dystopian novels that are popular today are *The Hunger Games* series by Suzanne Collins and the *Divergent* series by Veronica Roth. In the past few years, *The Giver*, *The Hunger Games* series, and the *Divergent* series have all been made into top grossing box office hits. The names of these novels are being marketed through feature film, which allows more youth to be exposed to the power of stories and the power of reading. When youth are able to visually see the setting of the story and see that the characters are similar in age, youth are potentially motivated to explore the story through the feature film as well as the textual version. The next section will provide additional elements of motivation that encourage youth to experience the power of a story.

Elements of Motivation

Motivation is an essential factor for youth to learn and without it youth risk struggling in school (Wilhelm, Smith, & Fransen, 2014). Youth are motivated by a variety of elements and it is important to discover specifically what motivates them to read. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007) conducted a survey asking 715 urban middle school students about their reading habits and 93% students stated that they enjoyed reading in their leisure time and they would read more if they had the time. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge reported that students participated in recreational reading because it

was fun and relaxing, they wanted to learn new things, and reading was an activity they participated in when they didn't have anything else to do. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge explained that some students furthered their answers in stating that reading helped improve their grades and that reading aided them in overcoming various difficulties in their lives.

Manning et. al. (2012) discovered that the biggest part of motivating students to read is independence. Manning et. al. interviewed and surveyed a group of 3rd and 4th grade students to determine if their reading behaviors have changed in one year's time and how they predicted their reading habits in the future. Manning et. al. determined that when students have the control of what they read as opposed to assigned reading, they will read more. Manning et. al. argued that recreational reading allows students to make meaningful connections in their studies and in return, this has encouraged them to seek out further connections. This finding is close in association with competence and connection in the Six C's framework. Through recreational reading, these participants were able to increase their academic competence and connection with the text, allowing them to seek out new information. All of these reports support the findings of psychologist, Victor Nell (1988), who reported that recreational reading took place only if the reader was reading a book at his/her appropriate reading level and interest, and that the reader positively desired to learn new information.

Various leaders, including, parents, teachers, and librarians, have proven to greatly influence youth's motivation in recreational reading. Knoester (2010) interviewed fifth grade and middle school students' parents to find out what they thought

motivated their children to read. The results were similar to what the students said in Hughes-Hassell & Rodge's (2007) study. The participants' parents in Knoester's study recognized their children were motivated to read because of the desire for knowledge and interest in the subject matter of the book.

In both studies by McKool and Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, participants reported that their parents encouraged them the most to read (McKool, 2007; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Parents encouraged reading by reading to their children at home before they were of school age (McKool, 2007; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Parents also displayed the importance of reading by reading various materials themselves including but not limited to non-fiction and fiction novels, newspapers, and magazines (McKool, 2007; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007).

McKool's (2007) survey results reported that the youth participants were more willing to read books that were suggested by someone they respected such as their friends, parents, teachers, and librarians. Those youth that were dedicated readers particularly relied on their friends' suggestions (McKool, 2007). Students also felt motivated when they were given the opportunity to share what they read in school, whether in the formal setting of the classroom or just chatting with friends (McKool, 2007).

Both studies reported that the classroom promotion of recreational reading was a vital part to motivation. Students reported that they enjoyed reading during dedicated times in the classroom if they could read a book of their choice (McKool, 2007; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Participants also shared that teachers motivated recreational

reading when they read along side students during this time (McKool, 2007). These students reported that because their teacher displayed a love and passion for reading, they felt motivated to read (Hughes-Hassell & Rodges, 2007; Knoester, 2010). Teachers also encouraged their students to read by having what they were reading on display either on their desk, or on their shelves (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007). Even conversations with a teacher involving the teacher's choice of reading provided a contagious motivation for the students (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Knoester, 2010). Another way Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007) mention a motivation technique is for classrooms to have a variety of texts available for students to read. Hughes-Hassell and Rodge reported that this is especially important for students from a lower socioeconomic status who may not have access to similar resources in their home.

Once youth are motivated to read, it is important to understand the ways in which recreational reading benefits youth readers. The next section explores ways in which youth are able to build relationships and connectedness by participating in recreational reading.

Elements of Relationship Building & Connectedness

Recreational reading is often thought to be an independent activity but it also has many elements that portray it as a social activity. Knoester's (2010) report focused on this specific point that reading is more of a social activity among middle school students. Knoester's participants reported that they enjoyed reading books that were on topics their parents enjoyed. One student from Knoester's study reported that he and his father were able to grow closer together because of their love for sports; the student would read

about sports and he then would be able to have consistent conversations with his father about sports. Knoester's study further supported the idea that reading can be used as a social tool by reporting that students intentionally chose their reading based off of commonalities so that they could talk to others about what they were reading.

Knoester's participants also reflected that they were able to connect with the author and the characters because they identified with either those individuals or the story line.

Lysaker (2011) also supported the social aspect of reading in her study of second and third graders who increased their social skills after working on improving their reading comprehension skills for 8 weeks. Reading comprehension skills require the reader to understand the character's reality. Lysaker's participants read stories that displayed characters with human needs, which allowed the readers to develop an understanding for how people feel, think, and act. Also, as students in Lysaker's study read stories that were consistent with the same characters, they were able to build a relationship between themselves and the characters. Lysaker's results reported that readers were able to connect to what the characters experienced as their life experiences progressed. Kaufman and Libby (2012) have found that even if the material doesn't relate to its' readers, they are able to expand their view of the world by having the opportunity to learn about others' challenges and successes.

This finding is supported by Hughes-Hassell and Rodge's (2007) study that talked about how books are used as a therapeutic resource. One participant in particular from Hughes-Hassell and Rodge's study described this by stating, "I like reading books about kids my age that have been abandoned and abused. Like I was. It helps me find

new ways to deal and confront it” (pg. 25). Many of the other participants in Hughes-Hassell and Rodge’s study agreed with this response and disclosed that reading lowered their stress levels and it allowed them to have a break from their own personal difficulties in life. Wilhelm and Smith (2006) reinforced this idea, finding that their participants were intrinsically rewarded when they could personally connect to the material of the books.

Elements of Escapism & Power of Reading

Victor Nell (1988) suggested in his article, *The Psychology of Reading for Pleasure: Needs and Gratifications*, that recreational reading is almost identical to dreaming and readers have the ability to disappear into the pages of a book. Nell further discussed that participants were able to feel so immersed in the story line that their actions were effortless. Nell reported that though unlike dreaming, reading gives power to the reader to control the content and the safety of what he/she reads. This finding is similar to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) experience of flow. Csikszentmihalyi defined flow as a state in which an individual is so fully engaged in an activity that both performance and awareness are fused. He defended that an individual receives great intrinsic reward when experiencing flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; McKool, 2007).

Several of the studies addressed in this literature review associated recreational reading experiences with flow or elements of escape. Nell (1988) has reported that his participants felt like they had completely left the world they were in and started to live inside the story of the book. Students from the study that Hughes-Hassell & Rodge (2007) conducted have reported that reading took them to places they had never been. A

participant in McKool's (2012) study has described how sometimes he would be so immersed in reading that he didn't recognize time going by. These statements are often referred to as getting lost in a book.

Nell (1988) has described this trance like feeling even further stating that the reader loses self-awareness. Lysaker (2011) has supported this idea by referring to reading as losing oneself in a cross way "between the self and world" (pg. 527). Kaufman and Libby's (2012) study has addressed this exact occurrence and referred to it as experience taking. Kaufman and Libby's study took this idea of transforming to an additional level in which their findings included that readers not only lose self-awareness and time during flow reading but they were also able to take on the character's roles. Kaufman and Libby have described that this event went so far that the readers reported to have changed their own beliefs based on this experience-taking event. This experience-taking marvel attests that readers do in fact live a thousand lives.

Conclusions

The literature review has suggested that youth are motivated by intrinsic and extrinsic factors, youth have been able to build connections and relationships from recreational reading, and youth have been able to escape through the power of recreational reading. These motivations, connections, and benefits have been explored in young students, elementary age to early high school years, but not in college students or emerging adults. College is a time that students develop their human potential and their individuality (Garfield, & David, 1986). This development leads students to face challenges and explore new ideas (Chickering, 1972). This development in my

participants aided them in recognizing Jonas's own development as an individual as well as their own developments as a recreational reader. There is also a gap in the research about how particular genres affect reader's development. This is an important topic area to research because some readers particularly focus on reading certain genres and this would factor into reader development.

This thesis explores how recreational reading has aided in the development of youth in the emerging adulthood age category, focusing on six main areas of development derived from the Six C's of PYD framework. Participants reflected upon how recreational reading has helped them develop competence, confidence, character, connection, caring/compassion, and contribution. This study particularly looks at how the reading of dystopian novels has affected these areas of development. The findings of this research study provide youth practitioners with the evidence that dystopian novels can positively affect the development of youth readers and recreational reading is a vital recreation activity for youth throughout their lifetime.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to investigate the way recreational reading affects the development of youth aged 18-25 via in-depth focus group discussions. The discussion centered on how participants developed competence, confidence, connection, character, caring, and contribution by reading dystopian novels. This study collected qualitative data to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' development. The research questions that guided this study were (a) How does reading dystopian novels help youth readers, in the emerging adulthood age category, develop in the areas of compassion, competence, confidence, character, connection, and contribution? (b) How does participating in recreational reading affect the overall development of these youth?

In this chapter, the methods of this study will be discussed, which include the reason for using focus groups, the setting of the study, the population of the study and recruitment efforts, the study design, the procedure of the focus groups, an overview of the data analysis process, and the validation of the data.

Focus Groups

I chose to use focus groups as my data collection method for two main reasons. One, my research questions request qualitative responses and two, focus groups provide opportunities for participants to experience in-depth discussion. This in-depth discussion goes along side the Reader Response Theory, which allows participants to think more critically about their development as a reader. While focus groups only allowed me to assess a limited number of people's responses, these responses resulted in richer data

because I was able to uncover additional details and sense the emotion behind the participants' responses. Using focus groups as my data collection method was also important because I used the Reader Response Theory as one of my frameworks. This theory involves that a reader's background and experiences influence their reactions to literature and this information needed to be collected through a discussion type setting.

Setting

This study took place on the west side of Texas A&M University's campus located in College Station, Texas. The focus groups were facilitated during February 2015 in the Youth Development Lab on the first floor of the Agricultural and Life Sciences building. The Youth Development Lab is set up in a conference room type setting with a large round table that seats five to six people comfortably. Participants were provided detailed information of how to get to the Youth Development lab, including parking options by the building, on campus bus routes that pick up and drop off university students in front of the building, and information on how to find the lab once in the building. The atmosphere was casual for the focus group discussions and light refreshments of bottled water and a variety of cookies were provided for participants.

Population and Recruiting

After I obtained approval for my study by the Institutional Review Board at the end of January 2015, I started my recruitment efforts by making an announcement about the study in all sections of ENGL 360, Children's Literature, and in ENGL 361, Young Adult Literature. I used the approved recruitment script to make my announcements as

well as handed out the approved flyer to all present students in the classes. This flyer contained a description of the study, what steps students needed to take to participate, as well as my contact information.

After the flyers were passed out, a sign up sheet was also passed around the classroom for students who were interested in participating in the study. On the sign up sheet, interested participants wrote down their name, email, and phone number. After each class announcement, Dr. Robinson sent a follow up email written by me through the class email listserv for ENGL 360 and ENGL 361. This way if students weren't sure of participating at that time, they had the information and my contact information for any inquiries and questions about participation in the study. Email announcements about the study were also sent through the email listserv to the ENGL 361 course students who took the class in the Spring 2014 and the Fall 2014 semesters.

A total of 19 students signed up to participate in the study. Fifteen of the students signed up during my class announcements and four students emailed me regarding their interest. After sending an email to the interested participants asking for their time availability, two students responded that they were no longer interested because of other time commitments and confusion of the focus group sign up sheet as the class attendance sheet. I also reached out by phone to those who did not reply to my email stating their availability and I had two people who were no longer interested. I did not receive a phone call response or an email response from five students.

After coordinating those who were interested in participating, I had a total of 10 individuals who were set to attend the three focus groups. I had four participants for the

first focus group, two participants for the second focus group with two no shows, and two participants in the third focus group. This brought my total participant count to eight students. The two students who did not show up sent notification that they would not be able to make it just before the start of the focus group. I attempted to reschedule a time with them but due to school and travel commitments they both were not able to reschedule. Since my projected number of participants was 15-25, I recruited for a second time in all the sections of Dr. Robinson's classes as well as sent emails to her past classes. From this round of recruitment, I received one student who was interested but this individual did not meet the 18-25 age range of the study criterion.

Seven of the participants were enrolled in ENGL 361 or had previously taken the class and one participant was enrolled in ENGL 360. Participants in the study were sophomores (n=2), juniors (n=3), and seniors (n=3). Participants were English majors (n=3), Psychology majors (n=3), Communication majors (n=1) and Sociology majors (n=1). Six of the participants were also working on minors including (n=3) English, (n=1) Psychology, (n=1) Neuroscience, and (n=1) Music.

Design

This qualitative study utilizes focus groups to obtain data to answer the research questions. I set up three focus groups with a total of eight participants and each participant took part in one focus group. Each focus group lasted up to one hour and an interview guide was used with questions containing topics centered on the Six C's and the Reader Response Theory. The Reader Response Theory was incorporated in to the interview guide because according to Grenby and Reynolds (2011) who authored

Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook, a reader's background is important when conducting qualitative research involving the act of reading. A reader's beliefs and experiences can influence the way a reader reflects and interprets the text. The Reader Response Theory and the Six C's of PYD were used to produce the interview guide in order to determine the development of the participants (see Appendix A for the interview guide).

The focus group sessions were audio recorded for transcription purposes with consent from participants. These transcriptions were used specifically for data analysis and the audio recordings were destroyed once the transcription process was completed. Observation notes were taken that included details on participants' reactions and expressions during each of the focus group sessions. These details were noted on the transcriptions and utilized for data analysis.

Procedure/Details of Focus Groups

To start off each of the focus groups, I introduced myself and gave a brief of the study purpose. I wanted the atmosphere to be comfortable and a relaxed conversation style and I let my participants know that they could feel free to ask me questions at any point and that this session would just be about dialogue among each other. Light refreshments were offered to the participants while they reviewed the consent forms. I then proceeded to tell the participants that if for any reason they wanted to withdraw from the focus group, they were allowed to do so and none of their information would be used in the study report.

Next, I read over the consent form and made sure participants were aware of all

focus group details as well as asked if they had any questions. Once any questions were answered, I informed each participant that their identity would remain confidential throughout the entire research process and participants picked a pseudonym to go by. Before starting the icebreaker activity, I asked the participants if it was okay that I used the audio recorder during our discussion. I explained to my participants that the recording would be used to transcribe our conversation into a data form that would allow for critical analysis. I had no hesitation from any of the participants in regards to using the audio recorder.

In order to ease into the questions from the interview guide, I used a discussion prompt from an activity called “Save the Last Word for Me” (Short, Lynch-Brown, & Tomlinson, 2013). I asked participants what was one thing that surprised or shocked them the most about *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. It was suggested that they could either write down their thoughts or if they wished to go ahead and share with the group they could. Participants were provided with pens, notecards, and a copy of *The Giver*. As a group we discussed their findings and then I eased the conversation into the interview guide questions.

In keeping my participants’ time in mind, I ensured that our discussion lasted no longer than one hour. Once we went through all of the questions on the interview guide, I thanked the participants for giving their input and time and invited them to ask me any questions. It was important to me that all my participants felt that they were both a participant and co-researcher. Participants were informed to be on the look out for a follow up email sent from me some time in March of 2015. This email contained

information on what the major findings were of the study, where participants could access the final thesis, and an opportunity to email me if they had any questions or concerns. This follow up email was key to continuing that relationship with my participants as co-researchers.

Analysis

After each focus group concluded, I transcribed the audio recordings. Each participants' responses were assigned a different color of text. The transcriptions were separated by each statement or thought and then separated into lines. The first level of coding was used to identify the overall meaning of each thought/statement, which included coding through themes and In Vivo coding (Saldana, 2009). The second level of coding utilized categorical coding to sort the first levels codes into categories of the Six C's and reading identity (which includes their personal journey with recreational reading, the time spent recreationally reading, and what motivates them to read). These categorical codes of the Six C's and reading identity were determined through classification reasoning and intuitive senses by determining which first level codes felt or looked alike (Saldana, 2009). These categorical codes were then summarized and linked to the research questions.

Data Validation

In order to ensure that my data is valid, the data was observed in several different ways. During the focus group discussions, my facilitation role involved clarifying any questions that the participants had as well as asking them to clarify or expand there answers. Also, I asked questions like, "So what you are saying is" or "you believe that"

and rephrased their answer in my own words to ensure that I was understanding the participants in the correct way. Another way my data was validated was through several rounds of coding to discover themes and trends. I also utilized a code book during the coding process as well as an audit trail. Lastly, the focus group participants will participate in member checks to ensure that their thoughts and opinions were transferred in the way they meant to relay the information. If participants have any issues or concerns the way the data was interpreted, they are able to contact me and I will clarify the information in the report.

Conclusions

In this chapter, I discussed the details of the methodology of this study. These details included the reasoning for utilizing focus groups as a data collection method, the setting of the study, the population of the study and the process of recruitment, the study design, the focus group details, the process of data analysis, and the validation of the data. This information provided valuable insight of details that went into the before, during, and after of the study. In the following chapter, the results of the study are discussed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Students enrolled in ENGL 360 and ENGL 361 participated in a qualitative study to explore how recreational reading has influenced their development. Data were collected through three semi-structured focus groups using an interview guide (Appendix A) with questions based off of the Six C's of PYD and the Reader Response Theory. A total of eight students participated in the focus groups. The data were transcribed and then the transcriptions were coded through In Vivo coding and categorical coding based on the Six C's. These codes allowed for themes to be discovered, which provided the results of the study. In this chapter, I will discuss the results of the study including, the participants' reading backgrounds and their reading journeys, and the participants' development through the Six C's.

Reader Journeys

In line with the Reader Response Theory, it was important for me as a researcher to understand each of my participants' journeys as recreational readers. A reader's personal history and experiences with literature can affect the reader's response to a text (Rosenblatt, 1968). Next, each of the participants reading journeys is provided:

Rachel

Rachel was one of the first participants that emailed me to participate in the study. She was very interested in helping me out and was eager to participate. Rachel has always been an avid reader. When she was younger, recreational reading was an activity that was constantly a priority of hers and she was drawn to specific genres. She

likes a book that is interesting, intense, and action packed. Also, she is more prone to read books by authors that are recommended to her than authors that she is not familiar with.

Over the course of the years, Rachel's recreational reading habits have decreased dramatically. While she still believes that this activity is valuable to her development, she reports that now her schoolwork is her main priority. She feels like she doesn't have the time to read for fun and she feels pressured when she is reading for fun that she should be reading for school. When Rachel dedicates the time to read for recreation and it is a novel with an intense story line, she finds herself sacrificing time in other areas of her life in order to read.

Jenni

Jenni was very timely in communicating that she wanted to be a part of the study. She showed enthusiasm throughout the entire focus group and I could tell that she enjoyed the conversation. Jenni read everything growing up. Reading was so important to her that whenever she would get in trouble with her parents, they wouldn't necessarily ground her but would take her books away. She definitely does not have the same recreational reading habits as she did when she was younger. She still considers recreational reading to be important but now that she is in college other time commitments have taken priority.

Jenni wishes she had more time to read today and she still writes down to-read book lists. When she does get a chance to read, she usually picks a book to read based on her mood and from a specific genre. She enjoys medical thrillers and historical

fiction. Fantasy is usually a hit or miss because she likes to read books with fairly realistic story lines. According to Jenni, if the story line is different, unique, and she can visualize the storyline in real life, the book is usually a hit.

Cornelia

Cornelia was one of the first participants to sign up for the study during class. She showed great interest in the study and I could tell that she was very excited to participate through our email conversations. Cornelia grew up reading a lot and this included frequent trips to the bookstore with her twin sister. She and her sister would regularly trade books. Her reading habits have changed since beginning college. Cornelia feels that her schoolwork takes priority over reading for recreation. But, when she has some spare time, recreational reading is one of the first things she wants to do.

Cornelia is drawn to read for recreation because she desires to learn and understand people who are different than her. She reported that books are a way to understand people and what they are going through. She also finds reading enjoyable and her occasional trips to Half-Priced Books remind her of going to the bookstore when she was younger. Cornelia also enjoys taking courses like Young Adult Literature and Children's Literature because then it is a school requirement to read books she normally would for recreational reading.

Menerva

Menerva was the first person to email me saying she was interested in the study. She kept in great contact about the focus group details and I could tell how big of an impact recreational reading has had on her through her continuous enthusiasm during the

focus group discussions. Menerva reported that recreational reading was a big part of her childhood. She read a lot when she was younger and it was one of her favorite things to do and it still is today. She also contributes her love of writing to her time spent recreational reading.

Menerva's reading habits have changed since she was younger. Now that she is in college, her schoolwork is her main focus. She still frequently shops for books at Half Price Books and enjoys reading for recreation because it is an opportunity for her to participate in an active form of leisure. She is drawn to books that take you on an adventure and require you to think through the story line.

Grace

Grace signed up for the study during class and she showed her excitement to participate in the study from the moment she walked in the room where the focus group was held until the moment she left. She found the study to be captivating and interesting. Recreational reading time became a habit for Grace because she grew up reading before bed every night. She was always drawn to high adventure stories and mystery novels such as *The Boxcar Children*, *Hardy Boys*, and *Nancy Drew*. Grace didn't just read at home; she also read at school. Her teachers had books provided in each classroom for students to read when their work was completed. Grace became a big fan of the *Hardy Boys* series while reading during free time at school.

Grace's recreational reading habits have changed since coming to college. She does get to read a lot of fictional books for school because of her major concentration but they aren't always what she would choose to read during her free time. When

Grace's school semester is over, recreational reading is the first thing she wants to do. What draws Grace to participate in recreational reading is the fact that she can experience new things. As a cautious person, Grace is able to put her neck on the line and risk everything. She also enjoys being able to visit different places and times through reading.

Amber

Amber was one of the first participants to sign up during class. She was excited to be a part of the study and she was the first to share about her reading experiences. Amber's love for recreational reading started because her mom read to her a lot when she was younger. One of her favorite series of books growing up was *Little House on the Prairie*.

She still is a frequent visitor to bookstores like Half Priced Books, the library, and basically anywhere that had books. Amber likes to be swept away by what she is reading. She liked to escape through genres like fantasy and utopian/dystopian. She enjoyed books that weren't realistic to everyday experiences so she could imagine something fresh and exciting.

Amber's recreational reading habits have changed now that she is in college but she always strives to take an English class every semester because the required books are ones she enjoys reading. Now, she enjoys books that test her and make her think about the storyline. She also finds pleasure in thinking about what she learns from reading the books she chooses.

Elise

Elise contacted me by email saying she was interested in participating in the study. She was pretty quiet at first during the focus group discussion but after talking about how recreational reading has impacted her life, she opened up and was more detailed in her communication. Recreational reading for Elise when she was younger was used as an escape. She described that she usually would set up a reading nook on the couch. She lived in an apartment with her mother and siblings so the environment was very noisy. Reading was a great way for her to step into a different place and time. She recalls that even today, it's necessary for her to have noise while she reads because it creates a similar setting like when she was younger.

Elise loved the *Series of Unfortunate Events* and she desired to journey with the same characters in each book. Her mom is the one person who always encouraged her to read and suggested books that she may like. Even today, her mom is the one person who can persuade her to read books that she is hesitant about. Now, Elise is drawn to the classics. Some of her favorites are *Wuthering Heights* and any thing authored by William Shakespeare.

Elise's recreational reading habits have changed now that she is in college. Her reading for class usually takes priority but when she does have free time, recreational reading is the first activity she wants to do. Elise admires the way reading allows her to escape and travel into different worlds.

Nicole

Nicole was the last person to sign up for the study. She was pretty reserved with her answers to the discussion questions but after a few minutes she warmed up and showed enthusiasm in her communication. Nicole's reading journey started as a challenge. She had trouble reading at her grade level and in order to improve her reading skills, her parents enrolled her in summer school after Kindergarten. She is thankful for this challenge now because after summer school, she couldn't stop reading. Recreational reading became a non-stop activity for her.

Nicole was always drawn to book series such as *The Babysitter's Club*, *Series of Unfortunate Events*, and *Harry Potter*. Now that Nicole is in college, she reported that she doesn't read for recreation during the school year because if she did, she probably wouldn't do anything else. Once the summer and winter breaks begin, Nicole reads all the time. Today, she is drawn to books that contain realism because she is able to relate the events in the book with her own life and is able to imagine different possibilities.

Development Through Six C's

In the following subsections of the development through the six C's, various words will be highlighted in order to differentiate between subgroups of the C's.

Competence

During the focus groups, participants were asked how recreational reading has provided them an opportunity to gain specific skills. Participants' responses revolved around the areas of **cognitive competence**, **academic competence**, **social competence**, and **vocational competence**. Lerner (2004) defends that competence is recognized as

having a positive view of one's actions in cognitive, academic, social, and vocational areas. Lerner notes that **cognitive competence** includes a person's thinking and analytical skills and **academic competence** includes proficiency in school. Lerner views that a person's **social competence** directly relates to their interpersonal skills and decision-making abilities; work habits and career explorations apply to **vocational competence**.

Reading dystopian novels contributed to the development of **cognitive competence** in participants. By reading dystopian novels, participants gained an understanding of corrupt environments and were able to reflect on their society. These reflections allowed participants to see how choices can lead to change within in a society. Nicole reported that, "The Giver helped me understand an extreme that society could go towards if things weren't fixed." I then asked her if she could explain more about the things she thought needed to be fixed and she replied, "Well, I guess it told me that there is a reason that things go wrong in the world. That it has to be that way for society to function." This statement was a common theme among all the focus group discussions pertaining to competence. Participants described that dystopian novels taught them that negative actions, like war and corruption, add meaning to positive reactions, like love and autonomy.

When talking about how the participants have gained specific skills through reading, Amber noted that:

Reading has helped me improve my analytical skills because you can read a story and oh it's a good story but then you learn to break it down in pieces and oh there

is meaning in this and meaning in that and it just makes like quality books, it makes them rich and you just want to read them again.

Next, Menerva supported this statement by talking about how she has grown to question what she reads. She stated:

I think that's what makes English such a valuable discipline that many people gloss over because many authors have the power and like the courage to say things in books that people don't want to hear so any other discipline, not saying they don't, but I think in English more so, you have the book to hook people...in a way I think that has helped me not necessarily challenge things but like kind of how to be more cynical.

Overall, participants felt that their critical thinking skills and their abilities to rationalize were directly due to time spent recreationally reading.

Participants described that **academic competence** and recreational reading were highly related. One participant talked about how she struggled with reading when she was younger but once she “attended summer school after Kindergarten” she couldn't stop reading. Reading became an activity that was ingrained into her everyday life. By developing academically to read at the proper grade level, this participant was motivated to participate in recreational reading and became more open-minded about the benefits of recreational reading.

Another theme that was consistent in the area of **academic competence** was that participants felt they had a better understanding of the English language by participating in recreational reading. Rachel supported the notion that the more you are exposed to

the English language, the more proficient you will become. She described, “I didn’t have a great vocabulary before I started reading a lot. So I directly relate that to reading all the time.” This understanding of the English language encouraged participants’ curiosity and desire to learn. Amber noted that:

I feel like as a reader, and y’all may be able to agree with this, it gives you like an insatiable curiosity and like, love of life because there are so many good books out there and so much to gain from them and so much to develop as individual by reading them and maybe by even putting into practice by what you learn from books.

Amber’s perspective of her **academic competence** relates to the Reader Response Theory. Rachel’s interest in reading and personal experience with the text is so strong that she is considering implementing what she has learned into her everyday life.

Another way participants gained competence by recreational reading was through communication skills. Several participants stated that by reading, they had become proficient communicators and have increased their **social competence**. Participants felt that by reading how different characters interact with each other, was an opportunity to learn about various communication strategies and skills.

By reading about different communication situations, participants felt that they were better prepared to make positive choices when communicating with others. Participants reported that specifically, an increase in vocabulary from reading and an increase in the knowledge of communication strategies aided them in making those positive choices. Grace’s feedback to this discussion topic supports the concept that the

communication strategies she has learned through reading have equipped her for the future. She stated:

Thinking through situations that you read about and like people you don't normally come into contact with um, definitely helps you relate and confront issues before you actually confront them in your own life. Like what would I do in that situation? Or like how would I even handle that if it happened to me? ...Its' sort of like being prepared I guess. Getting deep in your thinking about surface level things.

Grace's experience in gaining **social competence** through reading has allowed her to be more comfortable in a variety of social settings. The improvement of communication skills was discussed when talking about each C through the interview guide questions. This will be examined in the next C's as well as the major findings section.

In terms of **vocational competence**, all participants discussed exploring different career options through recreational reading. Especially those who read books where the author put in a lot of time researching the careers, allowing the characters to take on a realism role in the career. Both Jenni and Rachel connected over a series of books during this conversation called, *The O'Malley Series* by Dee Henderson and the series has had a great impact on their **vocational competence**. Because of the author's extensive research in creating and writing the character's careers, both girls felt that she was able gain valuable insight into various vocations such as hostage negotiators, doctors, and crime scene investigators. After describing the premise of the series Rachel stated:

They are all really intense jobs and she (the author) does a lot of research about the occupation and the career...I also don't think you can write a really good book unless you have done a lot of research so I've learned a lot about different things in the world because of the research the author has done to write that book. So, I wanted to be a hostage negotiator for like 10 years because of reading that book and I probably still would do it if I still had the drive to go to school for it.

Rachel's statement brings up an interesting notion. The author's knowledge and extensive research, allowed Rachel as the reader to develop **vocational competence**.

Several participants specifically mentioned that their love of reading and writing has allowed them to pursue a career that instills the love of reading and writing in others.

Jenni described this theme when she noted:

For me reading is like really therapeutic and writing as well. I love writing...I want to work with kids. I know for me reading is something that really means a lot to me and has done me a lot of good just in processing things mentally. And it I can encourage other people to just read or write about it, that sort of things.

It's as skill that has really helped me and hopefully I can help it help others.

Also, Elise described that she desires to work with youth in the juvenile justice system. Stemming from personal experience, Elise feels that providing recreational reading as an outlet to those youth in the juvenile justice system has the potential to provide valuable learning experiences. Overall in terms of **vocational competence**, recreational reading was viewed as an opportunity to explore various career options and an opportunity for

readers to personally support their career decisions.

Confidence

Lerner (2004) defined confidence as having great intrinsic feelings towards positive self-worth and the belief that one can accomplish their goals. Lerner also defends that confidence is shown through self-esteem and belief in others. Participants described two main ways in which they gained confidence through recreational reading when discussing how Jonas gains confidence to make change in his society after receiving the memories of the past. Participants reported that recreational reading has allowed them to become more confident in their **written communication skills** as well as their **verbal communication skills**. Participants have gained this confidence when communicating because of past experiences, much like Jonas and The Giver using past memories to communicate with each other and form a plan for change.

One way participants felt they gained confidence through recreational reading was through an increased exposure to the English language. All participants agreed that the more time spent recreational reading, the more they learned about various writing styles and techniques. This time spent with literature, allowed participants to grasp a sense of the English language and how text can be used to communicate thoughts and ideas. Grace mentioned how she is able concentrate on the content when she is writing as opposed to worrying about the grammar and structure of her writing. She explained:

Sometimes something just looks wrong...you just kind of implicitly know having read correct grammar so many times in books and stuff. It's [recreational reading] definitely helped me be consciously aware of what grammar rules are,

you don't have to really think as much I guess when you write things.

Overall, participants felt that seeing the language enabled them to independently pursue their own thoughts and opinions and enabled them to confidently convey their own thoughts and opinions through written text.

The other way participants gained confidence from recreational reading was through **verbal communication**. Participants felt that they had strong self-efficacy in starting conversations and were confident in communicating their thoughts and ideas.

Jenni noted:

Now that I'm older and I have that really strong foundation, not just the skills but the knowledge that I have gained from reading. It's make me a much more confident speaker. I did poetry and prose in high school. I do a lot of public speaking now through my job.

Participants reported that this confidence while communicating allowed them to build relationships and they described feeling empowered and self-assured during conversations. Menerva explained:

I would say I just feel really smart when I read and I can have intelligent conversations about different book I've read and I'm like I have read that and I can talk to y'all! I feel good about myself when I contribute to conversations.

As had mentioned, participants gained confidence in communicating through text but also through verbal communication by participating in recreational reading. Participants did not convey how they have increased their confidence levels specifically through reading dystopian novels and this may be a future area of research exploration.

Character

Many participants reported that recreational reading has influenced their understanding of behaviors and the understanding of societal and cultural rules. Participants talked about how their character developed when asked to think about how the memories ultimately allowed Jonas to determine what was right and wrong in his society. Lerner (2004) defines character as having respect for societal and cultural rules, morals for correct behaviors, a sense of right and wrong, and integrity.

Participants claimed that overall, recreational reading has allowed them to gain autonomy in maintaining good behaviors. These behaviors not only pertain to every day decisions but also decisions that concern their academic development. All of the participants reported during each focus group how their reading habits have changed and every participant either stated or agreed with the statement that now they are in college, schoolwork is their highest ranked priority. Participants felt that spending time reading for recreation has aided them in making productive decisions while being in school.

Participants also reflected on how they are grateful for their reading experiences and for the knowledge they gained from reading. Elise reflected about how recreational reading allowed her to make responsible choices when growing up. She stated:

I guess I have that insight from books. I can compare books to different life situations. That's how I personally stayed out of trouble. I would read and see these characters change and then I think to myself I can do that.

As participants reflected on how *The Giver* specifically developed their character, one participant reflected how she related to Jonas when he got upset about the true meaning

of release and The Giver calmed him down by explaining that his society doesn't have the memory of release as death. She talked about her current position in a communication role and how sometimes she has to deal with clients who come in to her workplace and are mad or upset. She described:

It really gave me a kind of benefit of the doubt type outlook...I work in customer service so a lot of times people will come in the door and they are terrible, terrible people and you can't work with them...But, I mean, sometimes I just have to step back and be like well, I don't their home life, maybe something is going on right now and they are just kind of a pissy person. They can't help it at this second. Tomorrow they will be fine.

This participant described that from reading *The Giver*, she was reminded of the importance of having character and respect for other people. Cornelia related to this statement that her development in character also included the message of being truthful and having integrity. Her reflection stemmed from the fact that in Jonas's society, the memories of the past are kept in secret and that keeping those things do more harm than good. She explained:

Sometimes censoring something or keeping something a secret, sometimes it feels like it's the right thing to do but keeping secrets from someone especially children and people who are learning, it just ruins their life I think or has the ability to.

By reading *The Giver*, Cornelia realized that it is important to be respectful and to be truthful to others when relaying information. For some of the participants, reading

dystopian novels made them understand why we have disrespect in our society and why societal rules are not always abided. Participants described that these occurrences were learning opportunities and added to the experience of being human. They felt it is natural to make mistakes and that one person can't be perfect all the time. The human experience involves risk taking and erudition.

Stemming from this idea of making your own decisions, participants then described how *The Giver* allowed them to reflect on the freedoms we have within our society. The participants discussed that the freedoms in our society allow us to truly experience life. Jenni noted:

Experience is what makes people unique and that's what makes people different. Having a perfect world where everything is just robotically perfect, it doesn't do any good. You know people that have all of these different experiences and like all of this diversity coming together, like wanting to do good things in spite of all of the bad things, that actually makes a society good.

Jenni and the other participants continued to talk about how the diversity of people and the variety of decisions people make, provides a way to gain resilience. The participants described that when society or a person makes a choice and whether it has a positive or a negative outcome, that outcome is always a learning opportunity to grow and improve. Having respect for those choices regardless of the outcome is vital in the prosperity of the community.

Connection

During the focus group discussions, participants were asked how they connected

to recreational reading and to *The Giver*. Lerner (2004) described connection as the positive relationships one has with people and the positive interaction between people and their peers, family, school, and community. Lerner furthers this definition by saying that both sides of the interactions contribute to the relationship. Participants responses revolved around how as recreational readers, they were able to **connect to others**, **connect to characters**, and **connect to the text**.

Participants felt that overall, recreational reading was an opportunity to connect with characters and to connect through relatable experiences. In return, this connection allowed them to relate to people in their own life and reflect on their own life experiences. With *The Giver* specifically, participants felt like they were able to connect Jonas as he discovered about the memories of the past because those memories are in existence in our world today. Participants described this experience as gaining a new perspective on familiar experiences and it made them think about the diversity in our world. Amber described this in her connection:

I think what made me connect to *The Giver* so much was that we take for granted all the sensation we have in life, like color and like music, and like all of those things and as you grow up you become more aware of these things. It was like that for Jonas as he received the memories so that's why I really connected to it. When you first discover something it's so amazing! And that's what it was like Jonas and how it is for a lot of us growing up...it's like a new perspective. It's like it breathed new life.

Many of the participants reported that they didn't think about things like having the

ability to see color and hold memories until reading a dystopian novel like *The Giver*.

Three of the participants discussed specific examples of how reading and connecting with *The Giver* allowed them to connect with people in their own life. Grace's experience with *The Giver* enabled her to build connections and feel at ease when she moved schools. She communicated:

I switched schools when I was in middle school and I remember talking to one of my classmates about it [The Giver] because I had just read it and he had just read it too and that was like an instant conversation topic even though we had just like met. So I think that it just adds things you can talk to people about and like it builds bridges with them. It's like you've been on a journey with them even though it's a separate experience because you know your reading a book.

Grace's connection with *The Giver* allowed her to start a connection with her classmate. Jenni had a similar experience in building a connection through *The Giver* except her connection was directly with Jonas and the Giver. She found comfort in knowing that they each had experienced a similar experience. She described her experience as:

I think kind of with the Giver and Jonas connecting, like shared experiences usually lead to a deeper connection. It's not just the memories that they are sharing, but you know not the memories themselves, but like the fact that they both at one point felt cut off from the rest of their community. They felt apart. They felt isolated. That sort of thing. And you know that really resonated a lot with me when I was younger. Because like they are different and I am kind of different. But they are the good guys!

Jenni continued to describe how this connection building experience has allowed her to be more open to forming new relationships. She stated, “If you are willing to put in the work and be a little uncomfortable, you will be able to connect with anyone eventually.” As long as you have just one thing in common, especially experiences, Jenni and the other participants felt that a connection and a bond could be formed.

For Cornelia, her connection with the Giver allowed her to find comfort. In times of uncertainty, Jonas was able to go to the Giver when experiencing new feelings and emotions as he gained knowledge of the memories of the past. Cornelia felt that she too was able to rely on the Giver in times of uncertainty. She explained, “I definitely connected to the Giver cause um I think it was the second time I read the book my parents were just going through a divorce, so he was just kind of like a father figure.” Just like Jonas was able to find comfort in the Giver’s advice, Cornelia was able to resonate with that advice as well.

Another way participants felt that they connected to recreational reading and to The Giver was through escape and relaxation. Participants recalled that during recreational reading, they were able to go to new places in times of uneasiness. Rachel noted:

There was a time in our family where we just went through a lot of crap...It was really good for me to be able to step into someone else’s life and that’s how I viewed reading for a long time. When I was younger, it was a chance for me to get out of my life and get into some else’s life for a little bit. And there’s nothing better than the power of a story.

Rachel then went on to describe that it was always important to her to share this escape experience with others. By connecting to the literature, she was then able to actually form a new connection by sharing about her experience.

Ultimately, participants felt that the connections between them and the book, allowed them to build and reinforce relationships. The connection between a reader and the book allows a virtual experience to take place. Like catching a connecting flight, readers were able to hop on board through a novel and set off on an adventurous escape through literary wings.

Compassion/Caring

In *The Giver*, the memory of love is what ultimately allows Jonas and the Giver to gain courage to make a drastic change for their society thus, compassion was an important topic that was discussed during the focus groups. Lerner (2004) defined compassion as a sense of sympathy, empathy, and love for others.

The focus group participants discussed two different ways of showing compassion. Participants used the word love interchangeably with the word compassion. Participants reported that by recreational reading they gained **love for others** and **love for their community**. The themes found in the data suggested that compassion is ingrained into every human being and that communities are built from the love that human beings have for each other.

Specifically in *The Giver*, participants reflected on that the actual of action of love could be done in a myriad of ways. Love isn't something mechanical. Love is something you feel, something to be acted upon and love is the vital component in life.

Participants felt that they learned that compassion couldn't be forced or required; it is something that we just do as humans. Participants reported that they learned this from Jonas's parents. Jonas is taken care of by his parents. He is provided with care, with food, and with shelter but he is not provided love. Menerva expressed:

They are missing that emotion of love, the feeling of love, the choice to and of love so it subtracts them from being a human being of society in general. So as soon as he [Jonas] realizes he's missing that, he's like I don't care about anything else, I just want that!

Amber reflected on the fact that compassion is integral in the meaning of life. She explained, "In a society that's full of love and doesn't have their emotions taken away, you know, there is value in human life. It's not like that in Jonas's world."

Participants also reflected that recreational reading has given them an opportunity to meet so many different people and in return this has allowed them to understand people from a different background than their own. Participants felt that now that they are older, they are more empathetic and understanding of people's actions and feelings because of reading about many people with diverse personalities and stories. Cornelia expressed this sentiment as:

I've read a lot of books about people who are in situations that I couldn't even imagine being in and it's helped me realize that we are still all human and we are all from the same and we are like the same. Even though our experiences are different, you can't immediately judge someone and say you know, they are

doing bad things because they are a bad person. You kind of have to understand that everyone starts in the same innocent place and it just kind of happens.

During this discussion around love and compassion, participants also expressed that they felt a community is built by small acts of kindness between humans. Rachel expressed how care and love could mean even simplistic type actions. She stated:

Like if you didn't have love, care, and respect for your fellow man then I mean you wouldn't do things like as small as like you wouldn't wash your hands because you wouldn't care if someone got germs from you...everything you do as small as washing your hands would be because you cared about other people and other human beings.

Participants also reflected on why sometimes love and care for one another aren't at the forefront of our decision-making. The control of the society in *The Giver* allowed participants to reflect on the choices society makes and the reactions those choices exhibit. Nicole expressed:

There is a reason that things go wrong in the world...It has to be that way for society to function normally. There has to be some corruption. I realized there is a reason for unhappiness and pain. That makes me as a person, appreciate what I have more because seeing every feeling taken away, especially love, that was a crazy contrast.

Nicole and the other participants explained that these positive and negative actions are learning opportunities for individuals and their community. Decisions that have negative consequences are present so that we are able to value positive outcomes. This

appreciation and love allows a community to grow together and prosper.

Contribution

Participants expressed various notions of contribution when talking about how they have developed from recreational reading. According to the Six C's of PYD, the 6th C, contribution, can emerge once an individual has acted on the first 5 C's (Lerner, Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, Phelps, & Gestsdottir, et. al., 2005). Stated by Lerner et. al. (2005), contribution entails behaviors and ideals that elicit his/her personal development as well as the development of his/her society.

Many participants talked about how recreational reading has allowed them to gain skills. Participants' reading experiences enabled them to become competent through gained knowledge, confident when writing and expressing their thoughts and opinions, connectors of valuable relationships, have shown character through their actions and beliefs, and have shown compassion for others as well as their society. These skills have aided participants in their development and will continue to help them aid society through various careers and actions.

Cornelia expressed how recreational reading has allowed her to **contribute to others**. She said, "Reading has helped me reach people and teach people. The ability to say something interesting but also insightful has really helped me read people and help others." Grace also commented that her development from reading has reinforced her ability to communicate. She commented, "Communication is a big one. In writing and speaking and just being able to relate with people." All participants agreed that the main way recreational reading has contributed to their development is through

communication with others and with society. Menerva expressed:

I think it (recreational reading) has helped make me more aware of what things I think about and my future of where I'm heading and being an advocate for specific causes. So I'm not even sure where that is leading me yet but I feel like reading has given me things like, 'Hey, if you say things the right way, people will listen to you!'

Participants reported that they ultimately felt like reading dystopian novels provided a portal in which readers are able to develop internally and in return, this development helps aid there society through various actions.

Conclusions

Overall, the participants reported that development occurred in each of the Six C's through recreational reading. I feel that participants developed the most through caring/compassion by reading dystopian novels and they developed the most through competence and confidence by the act of recreational reading.

Participants reported that recreational reading has allowed them to increase their **competence** in the areas of critical thinking skills, rationalization, proficiency of the English language, social skills, and career explorations. Participants explained that they are more **confident** in their ability to communicate through textual communication as well as through verbal communication. Participants also felt that recreational reading has provided them an opportunity to develop their **character** and have noticed that their choices positively affect their development; they recognize the importance of having respect for others and for their society norms and rules. Participants explained that

recreational reading has allowed them to **connect** to characters and in return this has allowed them to connect to others and they reported that they have implemented what they have learned in these recreational reading experiences into their own lives.

Particularly the reading of dystopian novels has allowed participants to **care** more for their community members and for their society. Overall, participants felt that these skills gained through recreational reading have allowed them to **contribute** to their community through proficient communication abilities.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore ways in which youth develop from recreational reading, specifically through dystopian novels such as *The Giver*. The data was gathered through focus groups and then coded to obtain the results. In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which the results from the study compare with the literature review as well as the major findings for the study and what these findings imply for future research. This next section contains information about the results and how the results support the findings in the literature.

Discussions

This study can provide valuable information for youth practitioners who seek to implement recreational activities that aid in the development of youth. Also, according to the literature and the findings of this study, practitioners that use PYD and the Six C's as frameworks to evaluate the development in youth should possibly suggest recreational reading as another resource for development opportunities.

Participants emphasized that recreational reading was an enjoyable activity to do during their leisure time and would read more if they had more time; this finding is in conjunction with the work of Hughes-Hassell and Rodge (2007). According to Hughes-Hassell and Rodge, students would read more if they had the time and recreational reading helped students improve their grades and overcome difficulties in their life. This study's participants reported similar feelings to this when asked how recreational reading has benefited their development. Participants reported that although they do not

participate in recreational reading as often as they used to, recreational reading is one of the first leisure activities that they participates in when they have the time. As students in college, participants reported that they read for leisure mostly during the summer and winter holidays. Many of the participants described how they make to-read lists during the school year so they know what to read when the school break begins. Participants also felt like reading was a way to advance their education. Many of the participants strongly felt that the activity of recreational reading was the reason they are able to attend college. Reading was a mentally active form of leisure that allowed them to develop a strong use of the English language and enabled a curiosity for learning. Participants reported that recreational reading was a chance for them to escape during frustrating or tough times. Several of the participants claimed that through recreational reading they gained mentors and advice for life that they will continue to carry.

One of the themes that emerged from the data of this study was that recreational reading serves as a social resource. A social resource is something that aids someone in his/her communication skills. Communication can be performed verbally or through writing text. Participants reported that by connecting with the characters and the story lines in novels, they were able to build social connections in their own life. Participants also reported that some of their favorite books growing up were series, which allowed them to connect to characters and the setting consecutively through multiple books. This continuation of interaction between the reader and the characters, allowed readers to see the characters with human needs. Participants also reported that through the series, they were able to see the character's development along side their individual development. In

line with the study by Lysaker (2011), participants felt that they were able to take these reading experiences and apply it to their own life, which allowed them to understand and empathize with people in the real world.

Career exploration is another way this group of participants has developed through recreational reading. This benefit was not covered in the literature review but I feel that it is important to include in this discussion section because all of the participants discussed how recreational reading has provided them with opportunities to explore careers or have been motivated by recreational reading to pursue a particular career. Career exploration as a benefit to recreational reading was researched and there is literature present to support this finding. Richardson and Eccles (2007) conducted a study with youth who were seniors in high school to address this exact finding and they discovered ways in which recreational reading allows readers to form identities and create paths for their future. Richardson and Eccles reported that through recreational reading, readers are able to discover traits about themselves and a desire to expand their educational future.

Many of the participants in this thesis study talked about their future careers while discussing how recreational reading has allowed them to contribute to their society. One participant's career exploration story stood out to me. Nicole's recreational reading journey started off with challenges because she wasn't at the proper grade level of reading and was enrolled in summer school to advance her literacy skills. Once Nicole increased her reading abilities, she discovered the joy in reading. Now, she is taking her upper level classes in English and Psychology to become a speech pathologist. Nicole's

reading journey has allowed her to know the joy of reading and in return, she wants to help others become more comfortable and proficient in using the English language.

Participants also reflected that recreational reading has provided them an opportunity to try new things and travel to places they never thought they would. This idea of being transported is in line with the research Nell (1988) and Kaufman and Libby (2012) reported. Participants suggested that they felt intensely connected to these reading experiences and they considered their reading experiences as virtually going to different places in the world. Because of the great impact of these experiences, readers felt confident in sharing their journey with others. Participants reported that they enjoyed the freedom they experienced while reading. Participants explained that they could do anything or go anywhere without actually having to take the risks in traveling and trying new things. Overall, participants felt that recreational reading provided a safety net for them but didn't hold them back from discovery.

Major Findings & Future Research

The most apparent finding found in the data from this study was that recreational reading benefits a reader's social competence and communication skills. This is a substantial finding in the fact that recreational reading is more than just an independent activity. In every discussion centered on the Six C's, participants reported that reading has allowed them to become familiar with the English language and in return this familiarity enabled them to develop their communication skills. These skills involve both communicating through text and verbal communication. The prominent development of communication described by participants, encourages the idea that

communication should be explored as its' own C in the Six C's framework as opposed to having influence in each C individually. This idea should be explored more thoroughly not only as a development from recreational reading but also other recreational activities.

Participants reported that they were able to emotionally connect and relate to the characters they encountered while reading. While this is a testament to the author's research and thorough effort in creating the story, readers felt they were able to more intensely connect to characters that most resemble their age and occupation as a student. Readers felt that they able to connect to the literature and imagine those situations happening in their life. Participants also reported that they could envision the choices and actions they would take if the story line were actually happening. This finding supports the results of Knoester's (2010) study. Knoester's participants were able to connect to the characters and the storyline because the participants were able to identify with the characters and the story line. Grace referred to this occurrence when she said that recreational reading has "definitely helped me relate and confront issues before I actually confront them in my own life...it's sort of like being prepared." Grace was able to connect to the literature and then contribute to her own development by increasing her communication strategies.

The following idea came up in a focus group discussion that I believe is prominent for future research and creations: while there is children's literature and YAL, there is a lack of books that contain characters that are in the emerging adult age category. The idea of a new category of literature is a thought provoking interest. Maybe this category would provide those in the emerging adult age category additional

opportunities to grow through this realism.

These developing ideas of adding a C to the Six C's framework and creating a new category of literature are areas in which future research should explore. As a youth practitioner, this study is important in understanding the Six C's framework can be utilized in researching a variety of recreation activities. Participants greatly related to the realism in novels and benefited from reading about characters similar to them. Providing more literature with characters aged 18-25 would allow for additional readers to connect to literature and increase their development in the areas of the Six C's. Additionally, I believe that it is important to continue to explore how youth develop through the Six C's by recreational reading. This notion should be explored not only through the reading of dystopian novels but through other genres as well. Applying the Six C's to reading research will allow the youth development field to expand and discover new ways to provide supports, opportunities, and services for PYD.

Limitations

Even with various and multiple rounds of recruitment, this study only had 8 participants, which is nearly half of the proposed number of 15 to 20 participants. I believe that more students would have been willing to participate in the study if it was conducted after the ENGL 361 course had covered *The Giver* in class. I believe that the lack of participants in the study is greatly due to the fact that those who were recruited for the study had not read the novel.

Another limitation of the study is that all the participants were female and the study results and conclusions lack the perspectives of males who enjoy recreational

reading. This is due largely to the fact that more female students were recruited than male students because more female students were enrolled in both ENGL 360 and ENGL 361 courses.

If the study is conducted again, these limitations suggest that recruitment for the study should be expanded more than just in ENGL 360 and ENGL 361 in order to gain participants, especially male participants. Also, participation in this round of the study did not provide any monetary incentives. Incentives should be considered for the next round of this study in order to increase the number of participants as well as an additional appreciation to the students for their time and participation.

Another possible limitation to the study is that not all participants had read *The Giver* more than once. While my personal background of revisiting *The Giver* greatly inspired the study, I don't feel that my participants' lack of revisiting *The Giver* has hindered the results of the study. Keeping the Reader Response Theory in mind, each participants' experience with a novel is different than other readers. Some of my participants reported that they frequently revisited other novels besides *The Giver* and the other end of the spectrum was that my participants had too many books that they wanted to read so they felt they didn't have the time to revisit novels. Therefore, this occurrence isn't necessarily a limitation, but it is an area to consider and it allowed me as the researcher to gain insight on the reader identities of my participants.

In spite of these limitations and areas of consideration, the major findings of the study still offer support that youth in the emerging adulthood category have developed through the Six C's by participating in recreational reading.

Conclusions

This study looked at how youth have developed through the Six C's by recreational reading, particularly dystopian novels. Eight students at Texas A&M University who were enrolled in either a Young Adult Literature course or Children's Literature course were asked to participate in one focus group. Through focus group discussion, participants indicated that recreational reading has allowed them to develop through competence, confidence, character, connection, compassion, and contribution.

Although participants reported a decrease of time spent on recreational reading during their college years compared to when they were younger, results suggest that recreational reading continues to have an extensive impact on the development in readers. This study and the findings provide valuable support that recreational reading is a strong source for development. Because of the impact on development, recreational reading should be a leisure activity promoted by youth practitioners. An increase in time spent reading, will increase the development of the reader but also will positively influence the reader's community.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide Sample

-Tell me about your reading habits when you were younger.

-Do you have the same reading habits today? How have they changed?

-What draws you to participate in recreational reading?

*-Many of you have read *The Giver* before reading it for ENGL 360 or ENGL 361, tell me about your experience of revisiting *The Giver*.*

-What was this like for you? How did this experience differ to your original experience?

*-Jonas learns many things about his past world and how it has developed when he receives memories from *The Receiver*, did this in any way make you consider your past? How so?*

*-In *The Giver*, the society recognizes each member has ability to contribute to a specific role in the community, in what ways has reading helped you learn specific skills?*

-How have these skills aided you in contributing to your society?

*-Jonas gains confidence by working with the *Receiver* in order to make change in his society, has reading helped you gain confidence? In what ways?*

*-Ultimately the memories of the past allow Jonas to determine what the difference between right and wrong are in his world, how has reading *The Giver* allowed you to develop character and societal competence?*

-The concept of love is absent from Jonas's world. After receiving the memories of the past, Jonas realizes how love can change his society. He first learns what love can feel

like from The Giver and from Gabriel. What did this aspect of the novel teach you about caring and loving one another? What about caring within your society?

-Jonas and The Giver have a strong connection with each other and with the memories.

In what ways did you connect to this novel? Did these connections allow you to develop or think in a different perspective than before, how so?

-In what ways do you think recreational reading overall has helped you develop as an individual?