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entitled

Influencing Reading Engagement of Recidivistic Youth by Using the Graphic Novel

by

Frederick T. Guy, III

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy Degree in

Curriculum and Instruction

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An Abstract of

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Poor readers are often reluctant readers and many recidivistic youth fall into this category. Yet reading is foundational to comprehension. The problem that was investigated was the influence that reading graphic novels Book Club setting had on the reading engagement and reading comprehension of incarcerated youth. This was a mixed methods study guided by grounded theory and social learning theories as the theoretical framework. The participants in this study were 11 incarcerated youth being held in a Midwestern, mid-level juvenile correctional facility. The basic findings were that there was an increase in reading engagement and reading attitude of this population while reading selected graphic novels in a Book Club setting. Implications for this study suggested that this increased using graphic novels for reading instruction in juvenile detention facilities created broader opportunities for continued reading engagement of recidivistic youth.
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Table of Contents

Abstract iii
Acknowledgements iv
Table of Contents v
List of Tables ix
List of Figures x
List of Abbreviations xi
List of Definitions xii
I. Introduction 1
   A. Problem Statement 1
   B. Purpose of the Study 5
II. Review of the Literature 10
   A. Introduction 10
   B. Theoretical Perspective 10
   C. Visual literacy and the Graphic Novel 13
   D. Recidivistic Youth and the Link to Literacy 17
   E. Struggling Adolescent Reader 21
   F. Reading Motivation 22
   G. Reader Response 26
   H. Discussion and Book Club 27
   I. Third Space 30
   J. Conclusion 32
III. Methodology 34
A. Introduction 34
B. Context of Study 34
C. Research Questions 35
D. Setting 35
E. Participant Recruitment 36
F. Sampling 37
G. Participants 37
H. Role of the Researcher 42
I. Data Collection 43
   a. Qualitative Data Collection 43
      Observations 43
      Audio Tape 44
      Written Artifacts 44
      Field Notes 45
   b. Qualitative Data Analysis 45
   c. Quantitative Data Collection 46
      Qualitative Reading Inventory-5 46
      Elementary Reading Attitude Survey 47
   d. Quantitative Data Analysis 47
   e. Reliability 48
   f. Limitations 48
   g. Graphic Novel Descriptions 49
IV. Results 51
List of Tables

Table 1. Recidivism rates for juvenile offenders of the states that measure recidivism in a manner similar to the New York State of Children and Family Services…3

Table 2. Graphic novels read .................................................................49

Table 3. Participant demographics ......................................................53

Table 4. Participant number of sessions attended..................................54

Table 5. Number of words spoken in specific Book Club sessions ............60

Table 6. T-test: ERAS recreational scores............................................113

Table 7. Individual ERAS recreational scores......................................119

Table 8. T-test: ERAS academic scores...............................................121
List of Figures

Figure 1  Robert’s cause and effect concept map for violence .................57
Figure 2  Furniture arrangement prior to participant arrival for Book Club ..........80
Figure 3  Room arrangement of Book Club sessions 1-6 ..........................80
Figure 4  Room arrangement of Book Club sessions 7-24...........................81
Figure 5  QRI-5 Word Recognition Results........................................113
Figure 6  QRI-5 Comprehension Results.............................................114
Figure 7  ERAS individual recreational score.......................................119
Figure 8  ERAS individual academic scores..........................................120
Figure 9  Participant drawing ...............................................................122
Figure 10 Frequency of words spoken by participants and researcher..........138
List of abbreviations

AMLE….Association for Middle Level Education
ERAS…….Elementary Reading Attitude Survey
NAEP…….National Assessment of Educational Progress
OJJDP……Office of Juvenile Delinquency Prevention
QRI………Qualitative Reading Inventory
ZDP………..Zone of Proximal Development
List of Definitions

Reading Engagement………. Time that students report reading material for pleasure and their interest and attitudes toward reading (Brozo, et al, 2007).

Reading Attitude…………… A system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation (Tunnell, Calder, Justen, & Phaup, 1991).

Reading Comprehension……. Intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed interactions between text and reader (Harris & Hodges, 1995)
Chapter One

Introduction

“Individuals scrutinize the world through transparent patterns or templates, and then attempt to fit those patterns over what they see. The fit is not always appropriate, but without the patterns, the world would be an undifferentiated homogeneity out of which individuals would not be able to make any sense. Whatever the world may be, man can come to grips with it only by placing his own interpretation upon what he or she sees.” (Kelly, 1970)

Problem Statement

In the general school population, reading engagement, reading competence, and reading motivation decline as adolescents enter middle school (Guthrie, Klausa, S., & Ho, A., 2013). This suggests that critical analysis and application of concepts derived from the text is lessened by the adolescent reader. The current literature that focuses on reading intervention and research conducted with incarcerated youth begins by citing decades of research that shows a link between reading literacy, incarceration, and recidivism (Rozalski, Deignan, & Engel, 2008). Literacy has been linked to recidivism; however, there is not enough empirical data to argue that there is a causal link between reading literacy skills and recidivism, but that there is a logical link (Archwamety & Katsiyannis, 2000). Still, large amounts of money are spent annually to address poor reading and writing skills of recidivistic youth that end with mixed results (Nance & Novy 2011; Leone, Krezmien, Mason, & Meisel, 2005).

The longer these reading skills are underdeveloped, the more pronounced the effect (Nance & Novy, 2011). The characteristics of cognitive development, motivation,
and behavior influenced by reading skills arguably influences individual thought and action. It is reasonable therefore to believe that without effective, engaging, and empowering reading interventions, the juvenile offender may fall academically further behind his peers.

To master or to become more proficient in any individual undertaking, motivation to continue in and practice that activity is required. Poor readers who often do not have the motivation or attitude to continue participation in the reading activity do not get practice while good readers continue to participate in reading and get practice. This results in a situation expressed as the “Matthew Effects” by Stanovich regarding reading competency wherein the “rich get richer and the poor get poorer” (Stanovich, 1986). It is an aphorism he uses to describe the literacy inequity between good and poor readers or the end result of reading practice versus no reading practice. It is a succinct statement that underlines and bolds the belief that reading ability not only affects reading comprehension and reading attitude but in the larger picture may influence aspects of participation in a democratic society such as employment and political participation.

Correctional educators have worked for years based on the belief that education not only provides hope for their students and an avenue for change, but that improving reading literacy also reduces the likelihood of future crime. Correctional educators have continued to teach while facing constant scrutiny and pessimism from the public and from some legislators about the value of their work. Unfortunately, most juvenile correctional facilities’ objectives are based upon rigorous behavioral programs that target oppositional behaviors, aggression, drug abuse, and other delinquent behaviors rather than interventions that improve the reading skills and reading engagement of delinquent
youth (Krezmien & Mulcahy, 2008). From the incarcerated juvenile’s perspective, correctional education is just another detention facility required service. According to Wilson (1994) the acting administrator for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), capitalizing on the moral and social reasoning of recidivistic youth while building literacy skills may be effectual in rehabilitating reading deficiencies and perhaps reducing recidivistic behavior. This is to say that interventions that appeal to this group of readers’ worldview may produce positive results.

There is no national juvenile recidivism rate according to the OJJDP. This is due to a lack commonality in the justice systems’ definitions among the various states. However, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services launched a juvenile recidivism study that tracked criminal behavior of juveniles over a 24-month period following their release. They compared their data to six large states - California, Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia - that defined and measured recidivism in a similar manner.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% Rearrested Within…</th>
<th>% Reconvicted Within…</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>24 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California (FY 2004-05 cohort)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida (FY 2008-09 cohort)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland (FY 2008 cohort)</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina (FY 2006-07 cohort followed for 3 yr., average of 12 mos. confinement)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas (FY 2006 release cohort)</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia (FY 2007 release cohort)</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The recidivism data on juvenile offenders seemed to suggest that if recidivism and literacy were linked then the current literacy pedagogy in the juvenile corrections educational system was not adequate. To further illustrate the recidivism rate issue, in a Midwestern juvenile correction facility’s 2010 annual report a total of 75% of the male cases received were repeat offenders. This compared to 78% in 2009. A total of 62% of the females’ cases received were repeat offenders. This compared to 63% in 2009. In 2010 a total of 58% of White youth were repeat offenders, compared to 79% for African America youth and 71% of Hispanic youth. Percentages from 2009 were 62% repeat White offenders, 81% repeat African American offenders, and 72% repeat Hispanic offenders (Lucas County Juvenile Justice Center, 2010).

Supporting the position that increased literacy in part reduced recidivism, the RAND Corporation (2013) in a meta-analysis of programs that provide education to incarcerated adults, determined that there was a 43% point reduction in the possibility of recidivism of inmates who participated in the correctional facilities education programs. The Rand Corporation study concluded that there was still a need to understand and use effective programs in curriculum but that there was also a need to determine dosage and quality.

Unfortunately, delinquent juvenile recidivism created a state of instability that potentially denied juvenile offenders and the institution a steady and totally beneficial classroom curriculum experience. A possible long-term impact of this instability was that juvenile offenders ran the risk of being unprepared for the challenges of today’s global
economy that limited their ability to become an economically contributing members of society rather than economically dependent members.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the merits of using the graphic novel in a Book Club setting as an intervention to increase reading engagement of recidivistic youth and to examine the impact that this intervention had on their reading comprehension and reading attitude. Reading graphic novels in a Book Club setting was a social activity.

The structure of the graphic novel, the relationship between images, text, and layout challenged some traditional ideas about reading in which the reader submitted to interpretations confined by text alone. Unlike standard text where communication was dependent upon the reconstruction in the mind of the reader of the writer’s intent, the format of the graphic novel that combined illustrations and text may have helped the readers make comprehension connections.

This idea of combining issues and perception had been exploited in the popular culture with film adaptations of graphic novels and comic books. Combining the graphic novel with Book Club may have increased the possibility of engaged, meaningful reading and group discourse among recidivistic youth who had been identified as struggling or disinterested readers. Raphael and McMahon (1994) maintained that reading and writing developed through social interaction and that students used oral and written language to construct meaning about what they wrote. Dias-Mitchel and Harris (2001) suggested that Book Clubs that emphasized reading as experience rather than an academic task attracted students, even reluctant ones, to participate because they viewed discussion more as a
social event and less as the typical classroom reading activity (Raphael, Florio-Ruane & George, 2004).

This study proposed that reading relevant graphic novels in a Book Club setting influenced the reading engagement of recidivistic youth. Since educators and administrators within the juvenile corrections system wrestled to find ways to address the issue of recidivism and adolescent literacy, there appeared to be a need to implement more tailored research-based pedagogy in detention facility literacy programs. Student-centered instruction such as Book Club was constructivist in the manner in which Vygotsky suggested learners learned more by doing rather than by observing. Student-centered instruction capitalized on instructional issues such as active student learning where students solved problems in cooperative environments. Student-centered instruction also provided for inductive leaning where the participants addressed questions within the context of the material. Student-centered instruction helped students develop independent minds as well as enhance the capacity to make educated decisions and value judgments (Brown, J., 2008; Davis, L., 2010). Zambro and Brozo (2009) pointed out that educators needed strategies to capture a readers’ attention. These strategies needed to connect to the issues and interests that were relevant and engaging to the reader. This study provided critical insight into a specific intervention with potential to improve reading attitude and comprehension for recidivistic youth readers by focusing on reading engagement.

What was equally important was for educators to identify and use those texts and text formats for adolescents to read and couple them with intervention strategies in which these students wanted to participate. The goal was for the students to comprehend the
material in a manner that afforded them an opportunity for reflection and the opportunities to adopt, reject, or modify the literature’s concepts to their own lives. Graphic novels within the social context of a Book Club setting where the participants had the opportunity to share and discuss their ideas and viewpoints may also have assisted recidivistic youth to attribute value to reading because of this empowerment that expanded their views and enhanced their reading self-esteem (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2009).

There is a growing belief among literacy educators outside of the juvenile correctional system that graphic novels can be engaging and help reluctant readers achieve reading enjoyment and success (Demko, M., & Hedrick, W., 2010; Lapp, D. Wolsey, T., Fisher, D, & Frey, N., 2011). Galda and Beach (2001) expressed it this way:

Picture books offer a unique opportunity for children to develop visual literacy because they are able to return to the visual images of books to explore, reflect and critique those images. As children explore illustrations and develop the ability to read images, they will attain deeper meanings from literature and an awareness of how visual images are used in their own meaning making (Galda & Beach, p. 205)

Therefore, this non-traditional text format had the propensity to engage incarcerated adolescents’ interests in a subject or issue.

Despite graphic novels becoming a more popular literary format that was seeing increased use in the classroom, there still was little empirical research that specifically documented their use with adolescents in correctional school settings. As Stanovich (1986) suggested in his work on the Matthew effects in reading, when one group of
students consistently performs less successfully than another group, particularly in an area such as literacy, there should be concern as this lack of practice only served to compound the deficit in competency.

Book Club participation provided an authentic literacy situation and offered the reluctant reader a forum for discussion by providing a social setting in which adolescent participants used writing and exchanged oral communication within a community of peers to enhance learning and achievement. Administrators in criminal justice systems have long believed that there was a link between academic achievement and recidivism. Unfortunately, economic constraints, congressional regulation, and issues of access prevented correctional education researchers from conducting viable research into behaviors of recently released detainees. Scrutiny by some public officials according to Steurer (2003) prevented the general public from seeing the greater value of research in the corrections system. Both Leon & Meisel, (1997) and Nelson, Leone and Rutherford, (2004) concluded that individuals in juvenile facilities often received substandard educational services. Brunner (1993) also concluded that these individuals do not receive interventions that reflect evidence-based practices. Given the serious nature of juvenile delinquency and its consequences, there is an ongoing need to address the issue of literacy and recidivism and to improve the academic performance of this population by implementing interventions that take into account factors contributing to recidivism such as poor academic achievement.

The study being proposed was to contribute to the field of literacy education by closely examining the reading engagement of recidivistic youth and the impact that reading graphic novels within a Book Club setting had on their reading attitude and
comprehension. There should be transferability of this intervention to other juvenile correctional education programs.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this chapter the literature that guides this study was reviewed. Both visual literacy and graphic novels was carefully considered as was review of research on recidivistic youth and their literacy issues. An overview describing the research on struggling adolescent readers, reading motivation, reader response, and discussions in Book Clubs was provided as well.

Theoretical Perspective

This study was conducted under the social constructivist paradigm focusing on the theories of Vygotsky and Bandura (1977). The theories discussed were followed by a summary of their application to the study.

The Vygotskyian theoretical framework maintained that social interaction played a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978) concluded that social interaction preceded cognitive development. These social interactions involved learning behaviors, skills, attitudes, and perceptions that were influenced by what Vygotsky (1978) termed a more knowledgeable other within shared experiences (Crawford, 1996). Vygotsky (1978) further deduced that every cognitive function in a child’s development appeared twice. Cognitive function first appeared on the social level and then at an individual level. This first interaction was inter-psychological or between people. The next interaction was intra-psychological or within the individual and was where the student either embraced or rejected the input. It was during these interactions that the more knowledgeable others’ presence was important.
The more knowledgeable other within Vygotskyian theory was important in that the idea for potential cognitive development depends upon what Vygotsky defined as the “Zone of Proximal Development” or ZPD. This zone was the level of cognitive development attained by children through engagement in social behavior and social interaction with persons of greater ability, the more knowledgeable other. The ZPD was the area between what the child could do on his own and what the child could not accomplish alone. The ZPD was the area in which the more knowledgeable other could assisted and scaffolded the learner for greater achievement thus making the interaction collaborative.

Bandura’s social learning theory was complementary to Vygotsky’s work on social development in that it emphasized the idea of learned behaviors.

Bandura (1963, 1977, & 1995) created Social Learning Theory as a result of adopting parts of Vygotsky’s theories of social development. Social Learning theory claimed simply that through watching others, observing their actions, and behaviors, learning was accomplished by proxy. It was such observational behavior such as attitudes and outcomes of behaviors that children started to imitate and model similar behaviors as they learned and developed. People constructed their realities based upon how they interpreted input based upon their prior experiences.

The interaction between people and observations of other people’s behavior promoted cognitive development and thinking patterns that Bandura (1995) referred to as mimicking and reciprocal causation. We learned through observations of others performing behaviors and being reinforced for the behavior. The more the person modeling the behavior resembled us, the more likely we were to imitate it. Therefore it
followed that a member of a group that was perceived to be desirable made the best
teacher and so on. These behaviors and ideas were to be adopted by the less competent
members in ways that often explained bigotry and other less desirable characteristics as
well as admirable traits.

Graphic novel Book Clubs under the theories of Vygotsky and Bandura are socio-
cultural by nature. They are collaborative environments in which students publically
express their interpretations of text while at the same time express their ideas to influence
the conversations with peers and teachers (Kapucu, 2012). In this way, the teacher is one
such more knowledgeable other who models and facilitates the opportunity for other
participants to emerge and assume positions of more knowledgeable others thus allowing
for greater imitative behaviors to develop. Using a graphic novel under the Banduran
perspective may act like a mirror or lens through which the reader is given the
opportunity to observe behaviors, actions and consequences as they might also observe a
real life person. This coupled with Vygotsky’s more knowledgeable other capitalizes on
the social learning environment Book Club provides.

Graphic novel Book Clubs as with other Book Clubs can serve as a forum to
discuss, refine, re-think and negotiate the meaning of text (Paterson, 2000). A graphic
novel is an original book-length story of either fiction or nonfiction published in a comic
book style (Gorman, 2003). Studies examining the participation of recidivistic youth
using graphic novels in Book Club remain to be conducted. This research built on the
existing body of research pertaining to adolescent literacy by examining ways in which
recidivistic youth responded to graphic novels in a Book Club setting.
It was constructivist theory and the procedural perspective of grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (1969) chapter 3 that guided this study.

**Visual Literacy and the Graphic Novel**

It is a generally held view that when people comprehend language, they create a mental representation of the text world. (Zwaan & Radvansky, 1998). Readers and listeners construct these representations by reactivating and integrating previous experiences distributed across multiple perceptual and motor modalities in the brain (Zwaan & Madden, 2005). Simply put, this is visualization by the reader or the listener recreating in their mind the text vision created by the author.

Flynt and Brozo (2010) indicated that, in today’s society students are constantly exposed to visual images. As a result visual literacy becomes a complex and integral act of making meaning using still or moving images (Frey & Fisher, 2008). Therefore, making connections, determining importance or relevance of information must be processed using both text and visual images. Literacy educators argue that visual literacy should be taught in today’s classrooms in order to make the curriculum relevant to the lives of students (Carter, 2009; Monnin, 2008).

Burmark (2002) wrote that the most compelling reason for using visuals in the classroom was that images are stored in long-term memory which aids comprehension. Additionally, Flynt and Brozo (2010) argue that teaching visual literacy across the curriculum can lead to improvement in verbal skills, expression of ideas, self-efficacy, and reading motivation. There are now growing beliefs among literacy educators that graphic novels with their visual imagery can be a factor to motivate readers and to achieve reading enjoyment and success (Botzakis, 2009). Frey and Fisher (2004) also
maintained that within the context of popular culture, reading graphic novels can motivate and inspire creativity.

Ivey and Fisher (2006) believe that when readers select reading materials such as graphic novels, visual literacy can help them find their reading voices. In a longitudinal study of male reading habits, Smith and Wilhelm (2002) found that graphic novels were one of the few types of texts that actively engaged male readers. A Canadian practical guide to increasing boys’ literacy found that males responded positively to images because they were more oriented to visual and spatial learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2004). Although the findings in the guide reinforced Smith and Wilhelm’s finding (2002), the statement that boys were more oriented to visual and spatial learning presumed that female learners were not equally visual- and spatial-oriented learners.

The significance of visual input to readers was also examined in a study by Ujiie and Krashen (1996). They examined comic book reading of 571 seventh graders in two California middle schools. 50 percent of the girls indicated that they read comics while 83 percent of the boys reported that they always or sometimes read comic books. Half of the students who reported that they read comic books also reported that they liked to read. This suggests that reading interest and the ability to make meaning for a portion of the readers was dependent upon the combination of text and illustrations. This was in contrast to 21 percent of the students who did not read comic books.

Thompson (2008) pointed out that graphic novels appeal to readers regardless of socioeconomic status, culture, or personalities. The study by Ujiie and Krashen (1996) also found that the amount of comic book reading between middle-class and lower-income seventh-grade boys was no different. Although previous graphic novel research
has not specifically examined the use of graphic novels with struggling male adolescent readers, there were several studies that examine the use of graphic novels with special needs students. Since special needs students’ exhibit reading issues similar to those of struggling adolescent readers such as deficiencies in decoding, fluency, and comprehension, the research findings may be transferable.

To illustrate this idea, in a study by Cirigliano (2012), a graphic novel on cell biology was designed and presented to students prior to their unit on cell biology. After the unit exam, an analysis was conducted to examine the specific attitudes toward using the graphic novel as a supplement to learning and the impact on reading engagement. The participants for this study consisted of 49 individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 who were enrolled in a biology course covering basic cell biology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. There were 12 male participants and 37 female participants (Cirigliano, 2012). The graphic novel used in this study was entitled *Todd and Bhu Conquer Cell Biology*. Students found the graphic novel entertaining and indicated that they would like to use entertainment media like graphic novels in their school classes. Participants also indicated that the graphic novel made learning more enjoyable and engaging (Cirigliano, 2012).

In another study by Edwards (2009), there was an examination of the link between the graphic novel and reading engagement of middle school readers. The study examined four seventh-grade groups consisting of a total of 148 students. The participants were 51% male and 49% female in an eight-week study with three treatment groups and one comparison group (Edwards, 2009). Participants completed a pre- and post-assessment of vocabulary and comprehension, and an attitude toward reading
questionnaire. The findings suggested that reading graphic novels could have affected the autonomous reading motivation, vocabulary, and comprehension ability of seventh graders. Students reported that they liked to read more as a result of the graphic novel intervention because they thought that they could better understand what they were reading, that they liked the graphic novels because of the additional details that the pictures provided, and that they were more motivated to read at the end of the study (Edwards, 2009).

Several studies demonstrated the value of using graphic novels with special needs students (Smetana, Odelson, Burns, & Grisham, 2009). Young and Irwin (2005) worked with students in special education classes and determined that graphic novels improved reading outcomes and motivated students to read. Other theorists believed there were additional educational and social benefits of using graphic novels with students. Schwarz (2002) believed that graphic novels could be used effectively to teach multiple literacies. Similarly, Miller (2005) believed that using graphic novels allowed students to develop critical thinking skills, reinforced vocabulary, provided a stepping stone to reading full text, and inspired challenged students who lacked reading confidence, reading ability, or motivation for self-guided reading.

Gorman (2008) maintained that graphic novels addressed relevant social issues for readers such as bullying and divorce. Schwarz (2002) suggested that an important benefit of using graphic novels was that they presented alternative views of culture, history and human life.

As a result it appeared that graphic novels could have a profound impact on today’s youth in an increasingly visual culture. The visual format of graphic novels
could possibly foster enthusiasm toward reading traditional books since graphic novels provided background information about new popular movies.

As indicated earlier, although theorists, teachers, and librarians touted the benefits of using graphic novels in academic settings, there was not a significant body of empirical research to substantiate their use as a primary reading tool. Additional research that examined the use of graphic novels in K-12 settings in general and juvenile correctional settings specifically seemed to be needed. This study addressed the gap in the literature by examining the use of graphic novels with recidivistic youth in a juvenile detention facility using graphic novels in a Book Club setting.

**Recidivistic Youth and the Link to Literacy**

Academic achievement and literacy have been linked to not only recidivism but also to juvenile delinquency (Archwamety & Katsiyannis, 2000). The arguments as to the role and the strength of this link between literacy and recidivism were discussed but not debated in great detail. It was generally accepted that there was not enough data to warrant a conclusion about causality to the argument but that there was some type of link (Archwamety & Katsiyannis, 2000).

While much attention had been given to collecting and analyzing reading intervention data of non-incarcerated youth, little quantitative data was available for incarcerated youth. Although each of the studies and articles reviewed provided results that showed increases in reading decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills when using a variety of literacy activities such as silent reading, oral reading, and writing. Interventions such as intensive one-on-one and group reading interventions also showed similar results. However, sustained reading enthusiasm or the value that these readers
perceived about reading was lacking. The literature suggested that poor reading skills may have been a result of or at least exacerbated by the lack of reading enthusiasm and engagement.

According to the Office of Assessment within the Ohio Department of Education, during 2008 only 57% and 58% of seventh and eighth grade African-American students were proficient in reading. This compared to 60% and 65% of Hispanic students being proficient in reading at the seventh and eighth grade level. Only 70% of African-American students were considered proficient in writing in the eighth grade. This fell well below the required 75% mandated by the state and the 85% and 83% proficiency rating earned by White students in the seventh and eighth grade. Although other variables were involved in academic success, it was apparent that the poor academic success by students suggested a lack of literacy proficiency.

A juvenile detention center in Northwest Ohio deposed a total of thousands cases during 2009, and there was a decrease of 2,885 cases or 25% from 2008. Of these cases, 72% of the offenses were deposed by formal court proceedings. This compared to 74% of the offenses being handled formally during 2008. Of the total offenses, 85% were delinquency offenses. This percentage of 85% remained the same for total offenses that were delinquent during 2008. According to the Juvenile Justice Center of Ohio, (2009) there was a total recidivistic population of 73%. Many in this populations had poor reading skills.

According to the Sentencing Project (2014) non-Hispanic Whites comprised 53 percent of the juvenile population, and they comprised 33 percent of incarcerated youth. African American youth were 14 percent of all youth, but represented 40 percent of incarcerated youth. Hispanic youth accounted for 24 percent of all youth and 23 percent of
incarcerated youth. Statistically, African-American males were disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system and were routinely referred to organizations designed to provide intervention services. These services survived largely on grants. However, Steurer (2003) pointed out that there were social and governmental obstacles to extended or expanded funding. Examining the link between literacy, recidivism and reading engagement may possibly have identified specific literacy interventions, identified appropriate literacy interventions, or assisted in shedding further light on the link between literacy achievement and recidivism.

The outcome of this literature review indicated that incarcerated youth had academic functioning in the low average to below average range. Approximately 72% of incarcerated youth were reading significantly below grade level (Rogers-Adkinson, Melloy, Stuart, Fletcher, & Rinaldi, 2008). This academic failure was seen to influence school motivation and, as a consequence, reading engagement (Christle & Yell, 2008). Although delinquent youth viewed school as important and necessary to secure employment, only 15% who had been incarcerated ever graduated from high school (Standard, 2003). Standard, (2003) also suggested that delinquent youth had a significantly less favorable attitude toward school and lower educational aspirations and expectations than non-delinquents.

Incarcerated youth have also demonstrated significant reading, math, written, and oral language deficits when compared to their non-delinquent peers (Foley, 2001). Therefore, school failure appeared to be a common theme with incarcerated youth that may have been exacerbated by limited reading engagement.
The data in the literature appeared to be in agreement that youth who were incarcerated had lower academic performance. The average age for a tenth grade high school student in the United States was 15-16 years of age. In this study one participant was an 18-year-old tenth grader and another was a 17-year-old tenth grader. One participant who was in the eighth grade was fifteen years old, and one participant who was in the ninth grade was seventeen years old. The participants’ age and grade level conform to the literature.

However, it also appeared from the literature that the predominant philosophical position and direction of the justice system was to control behavior rather than educate (Rozalski, M., Deignan, M., & Engel, S., 2008). Reading interventions that focused on decoding and comprehension skills was a type of intervention that had been shown to help reduce recidivism in adult population incarceration. However, other factors were involved which limited the total effectiveness of this approach. These risk factors leading to incarceration were social, economic, and physical and needed to be considered when addressing reading remediation in the juvenile corrections educational setting (Christle & Yell, 2008).

These risk factors were categorized as internal and external. Internal factors included cognitive deficiencies where external factors involved family, peers, school and other societal factors. The internal factors ranged from concentration problems to fear of taking risks. These internal disability factors when listed as emotional and behavioral disorders accounted for 47% of the population of incarcerated youth according to Christle & Yell (2008).
Struggling Adolescent Readers

A struggling adolescent reader was often identified as being a reader that has been documented on norm-referenced tests as reading two or more years below his or her current grade level or had been shown to need additional support in reading comprehension (NAEP, 2011; Hall, 2005). Many poor and minority students who perform below the 30th percentile in reading skills enter school with academic vocabularies already half the size of their middle-class counterparts (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002). This vocabulary deficiency aspect and its long term consequences were identified by Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) and further examined by Cunningham and Stanovitch, (1998) that reinforced “The rich get rich and the poor get poorer” paradigm of Stanovich (1986).

The literature on adolescent struggling readers identified a variety of strengths and weaknesses struggling adolescent readers had. Some struggling adolescent readers were able to decode words easily even though they did not comprehend what they were reading (Worthy & Invernizzi, 1995). Others were been able to decode the words but were unaware that they were having comprehension problems because of a vocabulary deficiency (Kim & Goetz, 1994). However, common characteristics of struggling adolescent readers included: having difficulty decoding text (Swanson, 1986), having poor meta-cognitive skills (Paris & Oka, 1989), not comprehending what they read (Worthy & Invernizzi, 1995), and struggling to apply comprehension strategies appropriately (Hall, 2005).
Reading Motivation

Reading motivation is defined as the desire to read without correction from an outside force. It was influenced by several factors. Those factors included self-efficacy, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, difficulty of material, and lacking or unclear purpose for reading (Baker and Wigfield, 1999). There was a relationship between intrinsic reading motivation, reading comprehension, and reading frequency (Guthrie, J., Wigfield, A., Barbosa, P., Perencevich, K., Taboada, A., Davis, M., Scafiddi, N., & Tonks, S., 2004). Intrinsic reading motivation comes from within the individual and contributes more to the amount of reading done for pleasure than the amount of reading done for academic reasons (Guthrie and Cox, 2001). Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, (1999) also pointed out that intrinsic motivation contributed to reading frequency and significantly predicted reading comprehension.

A study by Becker, McElvany, & Kortenbruck (2010) supported the Guthrie et al. (1999) conclusion and also found that intrinsic reading motivation and reading comprehension was influenced by reading frequency. Therefore it was a logical statement to say that intrinsic reading motivation and reading engagement had an impact on for reading comprehension and learning.

Intrinsic reading motivation was also impacted by the task to be accomplished. Tasks that were too easy or too difficult often worked against a student’s intrinsic motivation and reading engagement because students did not perceive the task as being part of their overall learning. It was again reasonable to conclude that easy tasks were met by students with an “I know this stuff already” attitude. On the other hand, students may
have avoided the more difficult tasks because they perceived them to be too difficult and they anticipated failure.

Motivation research suggests that making learning experiences relevant to students’ expressed interests and capitalizing on what they already knew helps to motivates students to attempt learning tasks. This idea was advanced by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) as using a students’ fund of knowledge to advance academic achievement. Funds of knowledge are defined as “the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for households or individual functioning and wellbeing” (p.133). Modifying curriculum and enhancing academic outcomes could be greatly influenced by combining funds of knowledge or the skills, knowledge, expertise that resulted from cultural and family experience the student brought to the classroom with academic literacy or reading relevance therefore came from being able to bridge students’ interests and prior knowledge outside of the classroom to classroom learning.

It should follow that teachers in correctional educational settings could give students these reading engagement opportunities through Book Clubs to express their ideas as to what was relevant and then use these ideas connected to the themes presented in the text as the foundation of instruction and meaningful literacy learning activities. Bringing what was relevant into the detention facility classroom would have the potential to keep students connected to what was happening outside their detention facility and also gave them opportunities to reflect and comment on important issues. Integrating thematic issues such as social justice might offer opportunities for reflection and discussion on cause and effect and other relevant skills, strategies and . For example,
discussions on the causes of poverty offer the opportunity to discuss the importance of education. Issues of adolescent health could afford opportunities to discuss nutrition and chronic diseases. Discussion of music might open doors to have dialogue about art and its place in the community. The discussions on delinquency could provide a reflective mirror. Including these issues among others into the literacy instruction has the potential to make learning more relevant and could spur reading engagement.

This balancing act of collaboration between student and teacher was significant because it provided an opportunity for self-expression of adolescents who found themselves in juvenile justice facilities that may never have had previous opportunities to express themselves proactively within the context of community learning environment (Nance & Novy, 2011). Given the opportunity to verbalize ideas in group discussions like Book Clubs was one important outlet and could become a powerful opportunity to encourage deeper reflection and reading engagement by allowing an exchange of ideas and perspectives of each individual Book Club participant. Giving students the opportunities to discuss encouraged thoughtfulness and healthy self-expression and may have reinforced the idea of discussion as a preferred form of communication when faced with troubling situations.

A study by Naeghel, Keer, Vanteenkiste, and Rosseel, (2012) explored some of the essential components of reading literacy. They explored reading frequency, reading engagement, and the relationship between reading motivation and reading performance. The study participants were 1,260 fifth-grade students from 45 middle-class elementary schools throughout Flanders (Belgium). Questionnaires and standardized reading comprehension tests were administered. Reading performance was determined by means
of a standardized reading comprehension test and a student questionnaire which served as the basis for assessing students’ leisure time reading frequency (De Naeghel, Van Keer, Vansteenkiste, & Rosseel, 2012). This study found that autonomous recreational reading was more positively associated with reading frequency, engagement, and comprehension, but controlled reading was not significantly related to reading engagement and even yielded a significantly negative relation to reading comprehension (De Naeghel, et al. 2012). This implied that reading interventions aiming at fostering autonomous recreational reading engagement and, hence, breaking through the decline of reading motivation as children grow older should especially be focused on enhancing autonomous reasons for reading because autonomous reading engagement led to more qualitative reading behavior and better reading performance (De Naeghel., et al. 2012).

It was also noted that initiatives to reform literacy were only as good as their responsiveness to the needs of reader. As Brozo, (2012) pointed out, if students were exceptionally high achievers, there would have been no need for reforms. Why the focus on reading engagement?

Reading engagement was pivotal. In general, reading engagement is the extent to which a person has a positive attitude toward reading, seeks out texts, and makes time to read. It is comprised of many variables that include interest, choice, and self-efficacy. Reading engagement has been found to be a critical variable in reading achievement (Brozo, Shiel, & Topping, 2007). Reading engagement differs from reading motivation. Guthire & Wigfield (2000) define reading motivation as a reader’s personal goals, values and beliefs that affect reading process and outcomes. Reading motivation therefore was often synonymous with purpose for reading.
Reader Response

From a traditional classroom perspective, the evaluation of the interpretation of what was read by the student often was questioned as the student’s reproduction of the text to determine if the interpretation of the meaning was consistent with the author’s intention. To affix meaning solely on the author and the text or to assign meaning solely to the reader’s interpretation were both overly simplistic as explanations of text meaning. There were issues of semantics and syntax, so reading became a transactional give and take. Constructing meaning involved both the author’s text and what the reader brought to it (Rosenblatt, 2004). The reader’s attention to the text activated certain elements in his past experience, external references, and internal response that became linked with the symbols on the page. Meaning emerged from a network of relationships among the things symbolized as he sensed them.

Rosenblatt (2004) described this transactional exchange occurring in two ways; she describes them as non-aesthetic or efferent and artistic or aesthetic reading. The distinction between aesthetic artistic and non-aesthetic efferent reading derived from what the reader ultimately did in relation to the text. At the “efferent” end, the reader disengaged his attention as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements of his response and concentrated on what the text designated and what the information contributed to his end result which in a traditional classroom was normally learned information for a test. The information and the concepts under this “efferent” relationship guided his actions that were left with him after the reading was completed (Rosenblatt, 2004).
The aesthetic or the artistic perspective maintained that the reader’s primary purpose was fulfilled during the reading event itself because the reader’s attention was focused on the perceptual response being experienced via the text (Rosenblatt, 2004). This permitted a whole range of responses generated by the text to enter into reader’s awareness. Reader response theory looks at reading from a socio-cultural context (Brooks, 2006; Galda and Beach, 2001). This meant that a reader’s culture, attitudes, prior experiences, reading history, and values within a cultural and historical context influenced responses (Beach, 1993).

At the fundamental level, reader response considered the reader vital to interpreting the meaning of the text (Tyson, 2006). The reader could be removed from comprehension, and readers did not passively consume the meaning presented to them objectively. In short, readers actively constructed meaning subjectively through what they found in the text.

**Discussion and Book Club**

Book Clubs are commonly seen as a group of people who meet on a regular basis to discuss books that they are reading. The literary value of Book Clubs are embraced by both theorists and researchers (Paterson 2000; Raphael, 2001). Adolescents are typically social and like to talk. Book Clubs can be an effective way to use these natural tendencies as a positive tool to engage adolescents and literature. Book Clubs enhance certain outcomes as a result of the discussion component. These outcomes include autonomy, increased understanding, and a development for the love of reading. According to the American Psychological Association, providing students with autonomy and opportunities to make academic choices can be instrumental in increasing student
motivation. Also, according to the National Education Association (NEA) when adolescents talk with one another, their discussion reinforces new information and helps them to connect with existing ideas. Book Club conversations allow new ideas to be presented and build on student’s understanding. Adolescents can also use conversation to increase comprehension. During a Book Club discussion, a student can try out her thinking on others and express her interpretation of a word or passage. Her interpretation may be in reinforced by others, or she may discover a new way of viewing the characters and events in the book.

Adolescence during middle school years is the time when one may set lifelong reading habits and preferences. This idea was suggested by the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE). Raphael, Kehus, and Damphousse (2001) designed a literature-based curriculum called Book Club for Middle School. The curriculum was designed for adolescent readers and incorporates skills and strategies of reading acquisition and critical thinking that supports and develops students’ individual identities within the “Literacy Community” of Book Club. Book Club build from understanding self to understanding others by promoting socially active literacy engagement with meaningful texts and activities (Raphael, Kehus & Damphouse, 2001). Book Club has four primary components. The components are Community Share, reading, writing, and Book Club. Each one of these specific components is interconnected to support the development of student reading skills, comprehension, and critical thinking in student-led discussion groups that support the Vygotskian framework of “zone of proximal development.” The components are flexible depending upon the need of the students and the teacher’s desired outcome (Raphael et al., 2001).
The Community Share component includes Opening Community Share and Closing Community Share. The Opening Community Share is teacher-led and is a whole group activity that introduces the students to the procedures, specific skills, strategies, and knowledge that will be useful to students as they read, write, and discuss their book in Book Club. The closing component of Community Share allows small groups to share ideas and issues that emerged in their Book Club discussions. (Raphael et al., 2001).

The reading component involved students reading the book to be discussed. The reading was independent and supported by the teacher and other students. The crucial element in this component was that all members, irrespective of reading ability, had access to the same literature to be discussed and were afforded the same opportunities for written responses (Raphael et al., 2001). To ensure the reading focus was maintained, the Book Club teachers chose text that elaborate targeted themes and provided Book Club members the opportunity to use reading strategies and develop comprehension skills.

The writing component involved writing in response to literature and provided students the opportunity to build upon their background knowledge and reflected upon the significance of what they have read before group discussion (Raphael et al. 2001).

As mentioned, Book Clubs were student-led discussion groups. Students are usually divided into small groups varying in reading level, gender, classroom status, verbal abilities, and students remain in said groups for the duration of the unit. However, the text, in all cases, are theme-related, age-appropriate and of sufficient complexity to support in-depth discussions and a range of responses (Raphael et al., 2001).

In the Book Clubs, students discussed ideas, logged responses, raised questions, clarified confusions, and often related the discussions to personal experiences. In
addition, the teacher instructed students in the norms of appropriate behavior like listening with respect, building on others’ ideas, debating and critiquing ideas, assuming leadership, and following another’s lead. Thus learning to read, write, and talk in Book Club from a social constructivist perspective embodied democratic processes and learning within a community. (Raphael et al., 2001). The Book Club project was designed to enhance students’ ability to talk about books.

The use of Book Club made good sense for the population for this study. It provided a platform from which the participants could discuss and share ideas from multiple perspectives. The opportunity to consider the different perspectives provided the opportunity needed for the participants to develop a deeper insight about themes and issues of the graphic novels that they may not have considered previously on their own.

Book Club had specific and clearly defined steps and procedures (Raphael, Kehus, & Damphousse, 2001). Conduct of the Book Club in this study deviated some from the established procedures to accommodate unanticipated social interactional situations such as refusal to follow rules of decorum. As this occurred, the Book Club continued in its less structured format but still focused on answering the 3 research questions guiding this study.

Third Space

The orology and literacy link that Heath (1983) discussed in her book *Ways with words* captured the importance of this literacy discussion. Although the oral tradition provided communication between people in a society it only extended so far. Heath (1983) discussed how the people of Trackton used words as a matter of functionality. Outside of the community the depth of their oral tradition was surpassed with written
language that provided a platform were ideas could be saved and revisited in the future in an unaltered form. Heath (1983) pointed out that the stories that were spoken in Trackton by both the adults and children focused on what she described as events, personalities, rivalries and contact resolutions. These stories were rich in the community’s language but, as Heath (1983) pointed out, the language was limited in the kind of language that was required for school success. However, this difference between the Trackton culture and the school culture created a third space opportunity for discussion and analysis of literacy content.

Third space was a metaphor developed by Bhabha (1994). It is a concept that attempts to explore what happens when distinct cultural spaces meet. Most commonly it has been used to examine the relationship that created between home and school cultures. Bhabha (1994) stressed that this becomes a site of tension - of competing powers and creates a hybrid identity. Third space can be used to explore how diverse worlds can be brought together as often happens in educational settings.

Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, and Chiu (1999) have used third space theory in education to examine how different cultural spaces children can be brought together in the classroom, rather than those spaces remaining separate. Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Lindsay, Rosario, and Tehani (2004) emphasized the importance of the third space as a site for introducing children to the discourses of power. They suggested that third space in classrooms be perceived as a place in which academic discourses are challenged and re-shaped, but also give rise to the reconstitution and up-front placement of the everyday, out-of-school knowledge of learners (2004). In this study, they did not begin with the intent of exploring peer funds of knowledge, it arose as
crucial as they analyzed in-school data. They found that peers played an important role in helping youth know how to "do" school. They concluded that these peer activities seemed especially relevant to the goal of developing third space.

In a study by Gutiérrez et al. (1999), the researchers argued that the many different conversation events in which students engaged or were confronted were resources that could help students develop deeper insights of the natural world in both the content area classroom and in everyday life. Essentially, their study was about literacy learning in the secondary school content areas. However, they maintained that literacy was a complex subject.

The interactive communicative practices between peers resembles those demanded in school such as making claims and providing reasons for choices. These communicative practices often display themselves in out-of-school activities in the form of discussions of music, media, and clothing. These activities generally are not arbitrated by adults which leaves the youth to teach each other the concepts and practiced forms of discourse that are unique to youth culture. For example they learned what music is considered popular, what forms of language are acceptable in what circumstances, and how to make signs and written symbols that would be interpreted in particular ways by other youth (Gutietrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, & Chiu, 1999).

**Conclusion**

The literature review offered a synopsis of the research and theory that was applicable to using the graphic novel in a Book Club setting to examine how recidivistic youth discussed graphic novels and the influence it had on the reading attitude and comprehension. The literature provided context and background for this study. The
literature was examined in the following areas: visual literacy and the graphic novel, recidivistic youth and the link to literacy, struggling adolescent readers, reading motivation, reader response, discussion and Book Club, and third space. There were a limited number of studies that examined the use of the graphic novel with adolescent males. This study was an attempt to contribute to the literacy discussion and literacy research by examining recidivistic male youths’ reaction to reading graphic novels in a Book Club. The next chapter describes this study’s methodology.
Chapter 3
Methodology

Introduction

This was a group case study that used a mixed method phenomenological case study approach to collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data on participants in a graphic novel Book Club examining their reading engagement, reading attitude, and reading comprehension. Under this approach both the qualitative and quantitative data sets were examined concurrently (Creswell, 2009). Collecting both types of data throughout the study allowed for different perspectives from a variety of sources. The data collected included recording of discussions, observations, test results, and student artifacts coded in major categories. While the quantitative data would provide a numeric accounting of how student’s individual reading attitude and reading comprehension had changed over the duration of this study, the qualitative data would tell the story of how these young men discussed the literature and how they engaged with each other and the stories they read. Together the ethnographic data would help tell how and perhaps why these young men did or did not have shifts in their reading attitudes and/or reading comprehension and, just as importantly, how they engaged with graphic novels in Book Club.

Context of the Study

In the sections that follow is a description of the conditions of the study setting. The study participants are described as well as data collection and analysis procedures for each of the following questions.
Research Questions

This research attempted to investigate the questions:

1. How did recidivistic youth discuss graphic novels in a Book Club?

2. Was there increased reading comprehension of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?

3. Was there improved reading attitude of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?

Setting

The setting was a juvenile detention facility in a metropolitan city in the Midwest. It was a medium-sized residential facility for juvenile offenders who would otherwise be sent to juvenile prison. The detention center was a mid-level correctional facility with a system-based treatment approach that in part focused on supporting academic and vocational achievement. African American males accounted for 60 percent of the population while caucasians accounted for 24 percent, and Hispanics accounted for 12 percent. The average length of confinement was 12.2 months for a successful termination which required satisfactory compliance with the detention facility rules and 9.6 months for an unsuccessful termination which ended in removal from the facility and incarceration to a more restrictive detention environment akin to juvenile prison. The average length of confinement for all terminations was 11.4 months. The mission statement of the detention center was to “improve the state’s future by habilitating youth and empowering families and communities.”

The center was divided into units housing approximately six adolescents each. The daily activities included eating meals together in a cafeteria and attending twelve-
step style meetings and meeting with their counselors. The youths also attended academic classes throughout the day and were provided opportunities for recreation and exercise. There were visitation periods each week. The Book Club was conducted during the participants’ normal lunch time which included lunch and leisure breaks on their unit before afternoon classes. The participants chose this period to meet for Book Club so that they would still have Book Club and not sacrifice their end-of-day physical activities. The Book Club participants were given a modified lunch period by the center after the Book Club sessions. An alternate lunch period was offered to participants before they returned to their normal afternoon classroom activities.

**Participant Recruitment**

To recruit participants for the study the researcher first met with the detention center’s administration. The researcher presented a formal briefing including handouts and a Power Point presentation detailing the study’s focus, procedures, and legal restrictions. The researcher also spoke of the potential benefits to both the participants and the center. Questions concerning time, participant availability, limitations, and accountability were addressed. Upon consideration of the proposal the administration granted access to the participants and the facility with the expressed condition that the administration be kept informed of inappropriate behaviors of the participants.

The administration provided names of all male residents that would be available for the length of the study. The researcher made arrangements through the administration to meet with both parents and potential participants during scheduled visitation days at the center. Prior to meeting with the guardians and parents and their adolescent, the researcher arranged the meeting room which was furnished with identical furniture as the
Book Club meeting room. The researcher arranged the furniture in a standard classroom layout with tables and chairs facing toward the front wall where the researcher stood as a presenter. This meeting room was also directly across from the room that was designated as the Book Club meeting room.

**Sampling**

Because of the restrictive nature of confinement, the participants in this study were all volunteers recruited from the center’s population of adolescent males over the age of thirteen that were available for the length of the study. Therefore this was a sample of convenience. New participants joined the Book Club after expressing an interest to become a participant. This interest was associated with interactions with participating members in the center. The nature of the juvenile detention setting dictated that the population was exclusive, small, and shared many social, economic, and academic characteristics. The participants by virtue of incarceration at this level of confinement at juvenile detention center were recidivistic due to the nature of what lands an individual in this facility. Once permission was given from the university, recruitment began of all male adolescents aged 15 and older this detained population. The subjects were selected because of their common characteristic of recidivism. This was beneficial in understanding the central phenomenon of reading engagement and recidivistic youth (Cresswell, 2005). Having homogeneous groups helped to keep focus, reduce variation, simplify analysis, and facilitate group interviewing.

**Participants**

The participants were 11 adolescent, male, middle school to high school students, 14 – 17 years of age who had been identified as recidivistic offenders within the juvenile
justice system. Each participant had varying reading skills. The offense of each participant identifying them as recidivists and were categorized as misdemeanor offenses M1 – M5 and Felony offenses F1 – F5 as described in the 2013 Ohio Criminal Law Handbook (LexisNexis, 2013). Examples of misdemeanor offenses were negligent assault M1 – M3 and domestic violence M1. Examples of felony offenses were aggravated assault F-4 and domestic violence with prior convictions F-4.

Participants were assessed as reading at grade level or below grade level readers based upon the Qualitative Reading Inventory - 5 (QRI-5) (Leslie and Caldwell, 2011) assessment. The number of participants selected provided adequate data for the study and remained manageable for analysis.

**Deonte.** Deonte was a sixteen year old African American male who was in the eighth grade and lived with his mother. Deonte did not have a strong connection to school. He had aggressive behaviors toward teachers and fellow participants. Deonte joined the Book Club two months after it had started. He said he wanted to join the book Club because he had read one of the other resident’s copy of *Yummy* and heard Book Club was fun. He was present for the third book *Blokhedz* but voluntarily withdrew from the Book Club after the book was completed. Deonte participated but never was a standout. This may have been the result of his aggressive relationships with other Book Club members outside of the Book Club.

**Malcolm.** Malcolm was a fifteen-year-old African American male who appeared to be very intelligent. He lived with his mother, her boyfriend, and several siblings. He was convicted of a felony which resulted in him being placed at the center. He was 5 feet 9 inches tall and weighed 130 pounds. He had attended several schools and had enrolled
in high school but never attended. He indicated that he liked his teachers but hung out with the wrong crowd and that got him into trouble. During his initial interview he indicated that he liked to read and read for three hours a day. He answered the question, “What are some books you read” by writing, Chosen, Red Moon Rising, and Betrayed. The researcher’s impression during the initial meeting was that Malcolm was not so much interested in the Book Club but more about changing his daily routine at the correctional center.

**Alonzo.** Alonzo was a fifteen-year-old male of Hispanic descent. He claimed affiliation with East Side Bloods gang. He identified as White. He was 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighed 130 pounds. His record indicated that he was in the eighth grade. He lived with his maternal aunt after his mother was sentenced to jail. Alonzo skipped school and quit attending school at all after his mother went to jail.

Alonzo had heard about the Book Club from participants on his unit, and he approached the researcher during the 7th week of the study indicating he wanted to join the Book Club. He said that he was not a strong reader but found the idea of graphic novels exciting. After parental and subject permission were obtained, he was tested and joined the Book Club during the 11th session.

**Darius.** Darius was a seventeen-year-old African American male and a self-professed gang member. He lived with his mother and sister. Darius indicated that he was not fond of school and had no positive relationships with school personnel. He had been expelled. He was in the eighth grade although he said he had enough credits to be in the ninth grade. He was convicted of a felony that placed him in the facility.
**Devin.** Devin was a sixteen-year-old African American male who was in the ninth grade and a self-professed member of the Bloods gang. He lived with his mother, grandmother and younger sister. He indicated that his relationship with his mother was not strong. He was suspended from school for behavior but had strong artistic skills. He was incarcerated for felony burglary. Although he participated and offered insight, it was often superficial and inconsistent. He chose to use the illustrations to support his position rather than read the text. When given the opportunity to produce a written artifact, he chose to draw. He had in his mind the idea of writing a book and seemed intrigued with the graphic novel platform.

**Dishawn.** Dishawn was a seventeen-year-old African American male standing 5 feet 10 inches and weighing 135 pounds. He was in the 11th grade. He lived with his single mother and three siblings. He had a brother in college. He was a self-professed gang member. He did not have a positive relationship with school nor a positive relationship with his teachers. He was expelled on several occasions resulting in him becoming a non-school-attender.

**Serron.** Serron was a seventeen-year-old African American male who lived with his sick but supportive grandmother. He was convicted of a fourth degree felony that resulted in him being incarcerated at the center facility. Serron indicated that he was not very fond of school and did not put forth the effort required. He planned to get his GED. Unfortunately, he was locked up again before this could happen.

**Shaquel.** Shaquel was a sixteen-year-old African American male who was a member of the Gear Gang Crips gang. He lived with his mother and stepfather. He indicated that he had a strong relationship with his mother. Shaquel said that he did not
like school and barely attended. He joined the Book Club during the second month because he had read one of the other resident’s book *Yummy* and thought the book was interesting.

*Tyrone.* Tyrone was a seventeen-year-old incarcerated African American male who resided with his father prior to his incarceration. He was in the eleventh grade. He described himself as being an indifferent reader who owned no books and did not go to the library. During the initial interview, he was personable and respectful and eager to join the Book Club. However, he had a lengthy juvenile criminal record and was incarcerated for committing multiple felonies. Although he did not admit it, his actions suggested that his desire to participate in the Book Club may have been an attempt to add variety to his daily routine.

*Robert.* Jeffrey was a sixteen-year-old White male. He was a self-professed associate of gang members. He lived with his uncle. He was estranged from his father and stepmother although he said family was very important to him. He was a non-school-attender and admitted to not having been to school for over a year. He admitted that he struggled with reading and spelling.

*Tavaris.* Tavaris was a fifteen-year-old African American male. He reported that he did not have many friends. He was in the 10th grade and had a reported GPA of 1.24. He said he got along with his teachers and coaches but had disciplinary infractions which included being disruptive and disrespectful. He had not been suspended from school. He lived with his biological parents and had 6 siblings. He was 4th in line.
Role of the Researcher

The researcher had the role of participant observer. The researcher also worked as a paralegal in the local prosecutor’s office that had daily contact with victims and defendants of juvenile offenders. There were daily interactions with court and probation staff as well as daily exposure to juvenile criminal records. Objectivity was a goal of this investigation; however objectivity as a frame of mind where personal prejudices, preferences, or predilections had the possibility of contaminating the collection and analysis of data. Being a part of the juvenile justice system and having dealings with offenders similar to the participants reduced concerns of objectivity. However, complete objectivity continued to be an elusive goal at the practical level in research. To maintain objectivity in this study, the results obtained from the various data collection sources were cross-checked with other researchers who were not privy to any insider information to identify documentable trends. The researcher was both participant and observer.

As a participant, the researcher functioned in the role as facilitator which by definition indicated that the researcher was providing direction, guidance and supervision to keep the discussion flowing smoothly between the participants. During the duration of the study the researcher was not functioning in any legal association related to the court or the detention center specific to any of the participants or their cases. This was to establish and insure a rapport with the participants so that intentions were not misinterpreted.

A university doctoral student was enlisted to serve as a confidant, as required, so that the participants who might have experienced any discomfort as a result of participation during the course of the study would have a person to turn to. Discussions
between the confidant and the participants were private and confidential and were not be
discussed with the researcher.

Qualitative Data Collection

Research Question 1: For research question 1 qualitative data was collected in
service to the question, how do recidivistic youth discuss graphic novels in Book Club?
Using grounded theory as a procedural platform the qualitative data collected informed
the issues of reading engagement and reading comprehension of the participants as well.
The data was obtained through observation of all activity, field notes, audio tapes of
Book Club sessions, and artifacts generated by the participants during the study.
Descriptive field notes were made by using Spraldley’s (1980) observational categories
for descriptive field notes. These categories included the space, the actors, the activity,
the objects, the actions, the events, the time, the goal, and the perceived mood or feelings.
These descriptive field notes formed the foundation upon which the analytic field notes
were later created. It is important to note that no participant were put into a position of
possible embarrassment because of reading difficulties.

The study participants were made aware that written, audio, and observational
notes would be taken during and after each session for the course of the study. Any
reference to answers or actions by the participants were not identified directly to them but
only reflected as a response or action by a pseudonym.

Observations

The qualitative data collection included observations of the participants’ actions
immediately before, during, and immediately after the Book Club sessions. The
qualitative phase of data collection did not begin with any a priori hypotheses about the
outcomes of the Book Club discussions. The observations enabled the researcher to examine the specific ways in which the participants responded to the graphic novel while reading and discussing them.

The collected data was examined under the grounded theory procedural method of qualitative research. This method provided an opportunity for analysis of multiple data sources supplemented by audiotaping. The data was constantly compared allowing for the number of categories to increase and be refined. This increase in categories led to more abstract categories until central categories emerged (Glaser and Strauss, 1969). This concurrent collection and analysis of observational data continued until the meaning of the additional data was accounted for by the developed categories.

**Audio Taping**

The use of mechanical recording devices gave greater flexibility in the area of observation. Audio tapes were the primary source of transcription. Transcriptions were made of each of the 24 Book Club sessions. These were then coded using the above method of constant comparison.

**Written Artifacts**

Student writing and other artifacts related to the graphic novel were collected and analyzed. Due to attention erosion each forty-minute session was attempted to begin and conclude with five minutes of reflective writing. This was not always successful. The initial writing phase was to be followed by ten minutes of group and silent reading. The remainder of the time was to be spent in group discussion. The time allotments were adjusted to accommodate the authentic nature and social dynamics of the Book Club setting within a juvenile correctional setting. These changes were made so that any rich
data that could be acquired through observation could be made and allow for changes and refinement of the interactive nature of discussion so that the researcher knew who to ask, what to ask, and the context in which it should be asked. This enhanced the Book Club dynamics.

**Field Notes**

Field notes were used to augment and document observations, issues, and interactions. They were based upon the setting, activities, formal and informal interactions, nonverbal communications, and observed inaction. The field notes were written immediately following or as soon as possible after the Book Club sessions concluded.

This study examined ways in which recidivistic youth read responded to graphic novels while participating in a Book Club and then to measure changes in reading attitude and comprehension. Multiple data sources were used in the research. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected from the following sources:

- Survey results and interviews collected and tallied using the instruments provided with the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) (Mckenna & Kear, 1990) and the Qualitative Reading Inventory - 5 (QRI-5) (Leslie and Caldwell, 2011).
- Field notes and audiotapes obtained from observations during the Book Club sessions and related interactions with the participants.
- Artifacts completed by the participants and submitted to the researcher.

**Qualitative Data Analysis**

*Research Question 1*: Research question 1 data was collected in service to the question, “How do recidivistic youth discuss graphic novels in Book Club?”
Coding was applied in the following manner. Topic coding focused on the topic being discussed such as responsibility, selfishness, and delinquency. Topic coding was the first step in the coding process that was simply coding the data by subject area such as what topics were being discussed in the conversation. It was a type of data dump that required no interpretation but was essential in developing the analytic coding. Descriptive coding focused on the participants themselves such as participants’ age, reading score, race and demeanor. Analytic coding came from the interpretation and reflection on meaning from the data in other two coding areas so that new categories could developed that expressed ideas about the data including emerging themes to be discussed later as results. These categories were further refined using NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. This software allowed for a more seamless and objective classification, arrangement, and examination of information and relationships in the data. This provided a clear opportunity to identify trends and cross-examination of the information for each of the qualitative data themes.

Quantitative Data Collection

Research Question 2: Research question 2 data was collected in service to the question, “Is there increased reading comprehension of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?

Research Question 3: Research question 3 data was collected in service to the question, “Is there improved reading attitude of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?”

Qualitative Reading Inventory - 5 (QRI-5), (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011)
The Qualitative Reading Inventory – 5 is an informal reading assessment that is norm referenced. The instrument provides literacy information in three areas. The QRI - 5 provides information on reading level, specific areas of reading difficulty and documents growth based upon interventions. There was a pre and post-comprehension assessment using the QRI – 5 and the results were used to demonstrate an increase in comprehension that resulted from improved reading comprehension from the increased reading gained through reading graphic novels and through the Book Club discussions.

**Elementary Reading Attitude Survey**

Elementary Reading Attitudes Survey (McKenna & Kear, 1990) was a grade 1 to 6 norm-referenced Likert scale styled reading attitude survey that measured recreational and academic reading attitude. The assessment could be administered in a group or individually. The instrument had high degree of reliability. Internal consistency was calculated at each grade level and gender. The assessment was given to all participants before and after the study.

**Quantitative Data Analysis**

The quantitative reading data obtained was analyzed using the procedures outlined in the Qualitative Reading Inventory - 5 (QRI-5) (Leslie & Caldwell, 2010) and the Elementary Reading Attitude survey (Kear, Coffman, Mckenna, & Ambrosio, 2000).

Analysis of the collected quantitative data was analyzed using The Qualitative Reading Inventory – 5 and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey assessment and scoring procedures. Each assessment was given before and after the study and the data was compared using a t-test to determine if there was any statistically significant growth.
in reading comprehension and reading attitude of the participants. Although the population for this study was small, the two tailed t-test is not dependent on sample size.

**Reliability**

To establish reliability the researcher used an inter-rater reliability check by having another doctoral candidate code two the transcripts of separate Book Club Sessions to compare to the coding of the same material by the researcher. The researcher and the other rater were in agreement as to the descriptions of the codes prior to recoding. The researcher provided a clean copy of the Book Club sessions with coding nodes using the NVivo 10 qualitative research software platform. The other coder returned their coding and an inter-rater reliability was calculated with a correlation coefficient of .80 which signaled that the codes were relatively stable and reliable.

**Limitations**

Significant limitations of this study to emerge when compared to other Book Club studies included limited access to participants due to their incarceration, the transient nature of the study population, obtaining the required parental permission required by law and the Institutional Review Board, and the time it took for the participants to evolve into a Book Club.

Although the Book Club met for only one hour a week, there was anecdotal evidence to suggest that the participants conducted their own informal Book Club when the left the sessions.

The QRI-5 requires at least 4 months before gains might show and participants in this study did not spend this much time in Book Club, so such gains could not be
realized. Longer studies of this type should be sought to look for gains in comprehension skills in participants.

Appendix D outlines the data sources and data analysis for each of the research questions.

**Graphic Novel Descriptions**

Table 2

*Graphic novels read*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade/age</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/illustrator</th>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yummy</td>
<td>G. Neri, R., Duburke</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>15-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fist Stick Knife Gun</td>
<td>G. Canada, J. Nicholas</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>15-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blokhedz</td>
<td>Street Legends Inc.</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>15-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Static Shock</td>
<td>D., McDuffie, J., Leon</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>15-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V for Vendetta</td>
<td>MA., MooreD. Loyd</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>adult</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 gives a general description of each of the graphic novels read during the study. What follows is a more detailed description of the books and their contents.

*Yummy: The last days of a Southside shorty* was the true story of Robert Sandifer an eleven year old member of the Chicago street gang Black Disciples. Robert Sandifer got his name “Yummy” because like a kid he liked to eat candy. One day in 1994 Yummy accidentally killed his fourteen year old female neighbor. Afraid, he ran away and hid. He was found by his fellow gang members and was subsequently assassinated. The Story of Robert Yummy Sandifer made national news and started a discussion about urban youth violence. Yummy made the cover of *time* magazine in 1994. The book was illustrated with black and white illustration on heavy weight white paper.

*Fist Stick Knife Gun* is an account of the author’s life and what he has to do to survive in his environment. His account addressed the issues of violence and what it did
to the psyche of youth exposed to it. The Graphic novel’s illustration were black and white. The paper was white with a higher weight bond. The table of contents chapters were represented by illustrations as opposed to traditional numbers.

*Blockhedz* was the fictional story of a street rapper who had to battle the temptation of the street life in order to keep his dream alive of making it big in the world of rap music. Young Blak who was the main character had special powers that his brother who had died reminded him of. The graphic novel’s language and events although fictional closely represented issues that modern day urban youth face. The graphic novel had high end illustrations on high end glossy paper.

Static Shock was the fictional story of a nerdy fifteen-year-old trying to survive in his violent environment. Like Superman, he maintained a low key humble and nerdy persona until called upon to transform into the super hero Static Shock. He transformed into the super hero Static Shock to protect the innocent and to battle evil villains. The illustrations were in color but the quality of the illustrations and the graphic novel paper resembled that of a traditional comic book.

*V for Vendetta* was a fictionalized story that captured the repressive and restrictive nature of an authoritarian state. V for vendetta captured the power of the human spirit that had the courage to rebel against the oppression. The themes and language were sophisticated and required careful and repeated readings for non-superficial comprehension. This graphic novel was made into a movie by the same name and was released in 2006. The illustration and paper resembled that of a traditional comic book.
Chapter 4

Results

We began with a cast of characters. The study participants - Malcolm, Robert, Tyrone, Tavaris, Deonte, Serron, Alonzo, Shaquel, Dishawn, Devin, and Darius - came together in a Book Club to discuss graphic novels. Although they joined the Book Club at varying times, they engaged with each other and the books. There were twenty-four weekly Book Club sessions of one hour each. Although these young men may have also discussed the books outside of these meetings, there was no data about discussions that the participants may have had outside of these sessions, so the results to follow reflect only the 24 Book Club sessions. This chapter represents the results related to the three research questions guiding the study:

1. How did recidivistic youth discuss graphic novels in a Book Club setting?
2. Was there increased reading comprehension of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?
3. Was there improved reading attitude of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?

In this study, the researcher used a phenomenological case study approach to study how incarcerated, recidivistic adolescent males read graphic novels by in a Book Club setting. The Book Club met once a week for approximately one hour over a period of six months resulting in the 24 sessions. The Book Club met in a multi-purpose room designated by the facility administration in a florescent-lighted room that was utilitarian and adequate furnished by four rectangular school activity style tables and plastic patio style chairs. There was a two-way observation mirror that went unused and a window
facing the outside hallways as well as a white board and an overhead projector that were not used during the duration of this study. Figures 2-5 represent the evolution of room layout over the course of the study. Three chairs, stacked in the far corner of the room could be placed on each side of the table comfortably with one chair at each end. The chairs had to be arranged for each meeting, and the tables could be re-arranged if desired.

The researcher arranged the tables and chairs for the first three sessions but did not dictate seating assignments as in Figure 3. For subsequent sessions, the seating arrangement was done by the participants as in figures 4 and 5. Pencils and other objects used in the conduct of the Book Club were provided by the researcher and were required to be accounted for after each session by the administration.

The graphic novels were selected by the researcher based upon their thematic elements and relevance to participants’ social and economic background as well as themes of juvenile delinquency. The graphic novels used in order were: Yummy: Life of a Southside Shorty; Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun; Blokhedz; Static Shock; and V for Vendetta. A brief summary of the graphic novels was included in Table 2.

The participants, although predominantly African American, shared commonalities not simply because of racial identification, but because they shared similar social and economic conditions. Each one of the participants also lived in similar neighborhoods within the city and went to similar schools with similar demographics. Each of the participants had either gang affiliations, associated with gang members, or were familiar with gang life as evidenced in their participant descriptions in Table 3.
Table 3

*Participant demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gang affiliated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavaris</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcolm</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darius</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dishawn</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serron</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaquel</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deonte</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alonzo</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of these commonalities, participants used a common frame of reference when discussing the graphic novels. Table 5 depicts the change in discussion frequency per novel. The frequency of participant discussion was not entirely dependent upon the amount of time the participant was a member of the book club as reflected in Table 4. These interactions were a by-product of what they perceived Book Club to be and the how they connected and read the books.

This was evidenced by Robert who was one of the initial Book Club members. Despite being discharged from the center before the completion of the study, his actions with setting up the room and his recommendation to use tabs on certain pages to refer
back to during the discussions was instrumental in establishing how future members of the Book Club interacted during the discussions. The free-flowing discussions that tabbing pages created also established informal Book Clubs back on the unit that resulted in generating interest for participation in the Book Club by other residents. Irrespective of time spent with the Book Club, this connection to the Book Club was also evidenced by Malcolm who came later and was a participant for only six sessions. Despite this fact, he was a major contributor to the Book Club discussions.

Table 4

*Participant number of sessions attended*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Joined</th>
<th>Terminated</th>
<th>Quit</th>
<th>Sessions Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Robert</td>
<td>22-Apr-14</td>
<td>29 July 2014</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Tyrone</td>
<td>22-Apr-14</td>
<td>29 July 2014</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Tavaris</td>
<td>22-Apr-14</td>
<td>27-May-14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Malcolm</td>
<td>29-Apr-14</td>
<td>24-Jun-14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Devin</td>
<td>17-Jun-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Darius</td>
<td>17-Jun-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Dishawn</td>
<td>30-Jun-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Serron</td>
<td>30-Jun-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Shaquel</td>
<td>30-Jun-14</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Deonte</td>
<td>30-Jun-14</td>
<td>30-Sep-14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Alonzo</td>
<td>23-Aug-14</td>
<td>28-Oct-14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Research Question 1**

“How do recidivistic adolescent males discuss graphic novels in a Book Club setting?” was the first research question. This study examined data of how recidivistic male adolescents discussed select graphic novels during 24 one-hour Book Club sessions
while incarcerated in a middle level detention facility. This question was answered from qualitative data from transcripts of graphic novel Book Club sessions, field notes, and the participants’ written artifacts.

From reading the first graphic novel *Yummy* to the last graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, a chronological description of pivotal Book Club sessions is presented below. Themes are discussed to encapsulate the findings and to add additional clarity. Each theme and sub-theme is then discussed in the context of Book Club discussions and analysis of those observations provide the foundation for further analysis. The analysis of the observations are informed by comments made by the participants during the Book Club sessions. Participant comments reflected in participant written artifacts are also used in this analysis.

**Book Club Session One: Yummy**

The first Book Club started out with four participants. However, at the first meeting Tavaris was not present due to a prior obligation, so for this meeting Malcolm, Tyrone, Robert, and the researcher met at the assigned room 4:00 PM. Malcolm, despite having said he wanted to be a participant in this Book Club, came to the session and immediately said that he did not want to be there. In accordance with policy and the study’s parameters, the researcher wished him well and asked if he would be attending the next session. He responded, “Yes,” then he left. Robert, Tyrone, and the researcher remained. The researcher began by introducing the reason for the Book Club. The researcher told them, “You gentleman are the ones that are going to be reading the books, discussing the books, and suggesting improvements.” It appeared to the researcher by
their expressions that the participants were unfamiliar with the concept of Book Club. The researcher asked, “Do you know what a Book Club is?”

Robert raised his hand and said, “Sit around in a circle.” There was no further explanation of his answer and he looked to the researcher for a definition. The researcher gave a more detailed explanation of Book Club and told the participants that this was not a class and the researcher was not a teacher. The researcher further informed them that there was no evaluation, and that they did not need to raise their hand to comment. The researcher then introduced the first book *Yummy*.

They were told that it was a true story about an eleven-year-old boy from Chicago who joined the Black Disciples gang. Yummy, the main character had accidentally murdered a teenage girl and then he was murdered by members of his gang. The researcher asked the group if anyone had heard the name Yummy. Tyrone responded by saying, “A gangster.” When the researcher mentioned that Yummy was a Black Disciple Tyrone articulated that rapper Chief Keef was from Chicago, and he was a Black Disciple. At that time Robert acknowledged familiarity with Chief Keef’s work.

The researcher asked the two participants if they had any further questions concerning how the Book Club would be run. There was no response. The researcher then moved to the next phase which was to set the foundation for future discussions. The researcher introduced a concept mapping exercise for causes and effects of violence. During the concept mapping exercise (see Figure 1), participants wrote down associative words related to cause and effect with the operative term violence.

The exercise was explained and demonstrated. After thinking about it, Tyrone grasped the idea by saying, “So cause is shooting at someone and the effect is they die.”
Robert did not contribute to this discussion but nodded in agreement with Tyrone.

Because of a late start and time restrictions this session lasted 30 minutes. During this session the researcher spoke for 80.65 percent of the time (see Table 5).

Figure 1

*Robert’s Cause and Effect concept map for violence.*

---

**Book Club Session Three: Yummy**

The four participants arrived at the Book Club in a relaxed manner that suggested a comfort with Book Club. This was evidenced by the participants sitting down and appearing eager to get started. The researcher had noted that there were no indications of apprehension or nervousness that had been displayed by Malcolm during Book Club session one. Although the participants still looked to the researcher for guidance during this session, and their attitude was akin to students that looked forward to attending a popular class in school. This comfort level was evidenced by the frequency of participant talk versus the amount of time the researcher talked. The researcher talked only 28% of
the time (see Table 5). However, actions on part of the participants and the researcher demonstrated that the Book Club was still perceived as a class. The session started on time and Malcolm was in attendance for the first time. The researcher explained Book Club for Malcolm’s benefit and to reinforce the concept in the minds of Tyrone and Robert. Robert raised his hand and asked if they were going to discuss the cause and effects sheet from the previous session. The researcher said that they would. Robert led the discussion that amounted to nothing more than him asking Tyrone what he wrote. It was clear that both Robert and Tyrone copied verbatim the example the researcher had given the session before. A general discussion convinced the researcher that they had a satisfactory understanding of cause and effect for the session.

The researcher suggested to the group that they read to themselves up to page 53. At that point Robert asked if they could read it together in a “round robin” fashion. Although the researcher suggested that it might be better if they read to themselves, it was their Book Club. A vote was taken and the decision was made to read “round robin.” After the second rotation, Robert remembering cause and effect, raised his hand and asked the researcher, “Mr. Guy, I have an idea. You know how you have all of those post-it notes? You know how we all have different opinions? When we come to a page we can take off a sticky note so we can come back and talk about it. You like it?” The group responded positively to this suggestion as did the researcher. Different colored sticky notes were distributed.

With the introduction of the sticky notes, the participants’ discussions increased. Rather than approach the text in the methodical round robin manner they had previously
chosen, they now skimmed the book individually tabbing pages and commenting on pictures and words that grabbed their attention. Malcolm, uttered, “It’s deep” when
commenting on the graphic panel of Yummy’s initiation ritual into the Gangster Disciples. When the researcher asked him to explain he said, “Yummy cut his hand.”

This brought Robert into the conversation. Robert uttered, “Blood brothers.”

Although that was a true statement, Malcolm elaborated commenting on what he believed was the true significance of the event. He began his comment by saying, “Yeah, but you know you can get AIDS from that or catch some serious diseases.” He elaborated further indicating this single action had potential consequences although Yummy was proving his loyalty to the gang even if he had to face death. The researcher asked if the pictures helped tell what was happening.

Malcolm said, “Yes” but Tyrone said the book needed more color so that he could distinguish gang affiliations.

Malcolm pointed out that Yummy getting involved with the gang was a mistake and that his seeking attention could be found in other more positive areas like sports. Yet,
Yummy’s environment was not conducive to promoting positive outlet options. This lead to Malcolm referring to Yummy as “hard.” His reasoning was that to be part of Yummy’s group you had to grow up fast so Yummy was “hard.”

Robert added, “He kept getting into fights basically trying to prove that nobody could punk him.”

Robert again raised his hand and added to this discussion. He said, “The gang used little kids like Yummy because little kids don’t get into trouble.”

Malcolm added, “I think they use him because he young. He is not smart yet He is smart. He just don’t know about consequences and how things would turn out.”

Like Robert said before, “They ain’t really charging kids, so he thinks he can do whatever because he ain’t going to get in much trouble.”

Robert, Tyrone, and Malcolm continued this back and forth discussion foregoing the “round robin” approach to reading they chose earlier. They skimmed and commented on specific parts referring to pages that caught their interest in lieu of reading the book in a traditional manner and this became the preferred method of discussing the books.

Robert was confused on occasion and referred the other members to specific pages for clarity and to identify pictures to support or modify his argument. For example a discussion about *Yummy* lead to this exchange after the researcher had asked a question about the relationship Yummy had with another character in the book. The researcher asked, “Oh, you’re talking about the kid Yummy was in school with and that was his brother?”

Malcolm responded to this question by saying, “I know what you’re talking about. They became brothers.”
Robert adding to the discussion contributed this way. He said, “Right here, um, page 11. Starting off at page 10 he says, ‘Seen Yummy’s face all over the news. His name is Robert Sandifer. He’s being sought in the shooting death of a 14 year old girl.’ And then skipping over to page 13 that’s when it shows,” the researcher interrupted Robert and pointed out that the picture he was referring to was not Yummy’s brother.

After looking at the picture he commented, “Maybe not.”

Since comprehension was about building meaning, this discussion was evidence showing that during the discussions the participants worked together to help each other clarify points and ideas. This working together to discuss and understand the contents of the graphic novel continued.

Tyrone commented on the graphic panel showing Yummy holding a gun and said, “He don’t know right from wrong.” Malcolm pointed out, “He got to prove himself, so he tried to prove himself with a gun. That he got power and ain’t scared to do nothing.” The researcher asked why he had to show the power.

The answer came from Malcolm, “Because he’s little, and he wants a name for himself. He wants everyone to know who he is. That’s a way to prove it right there.”

**Book Club Session Eight: Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun**

Shaquel, Dishawn, Devin, Darius, Deonte, and Serron joined the Book Club during the reading of the second book while Tavaris and Malcolm had quit after the last session. Tavaris and Malcolm both quit the study saying that they had other activities they wanted to engage in. Malcolm told the researcher that he liked the Book Club and had nothing against the researcher. He indicated that he wanted to play basketball and Book Club conflicted with his basketball time. Tavaris told the researcher that he just did not want to
participate anymore. The next book in the Book Club was *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun*. The researcher introduced this book using a Concept Map to get the new participants thinking about the causes and effects of bullying.

Since there were new participants joining the Book Club, Robert took charge of the exercise. Robert took control of the Book Club by telling the new members, “This is Book Club. We read a book and talk about it.” Although Robert’s explanation was short and did not elaborate on procedures, it appeared to satisfy the new participants’ curiosity since there were no further questions about the conduct of the Book Club directed at Robert or the researcher. The researcher said we would do a concept map on bullying. Robert described and demonstrated the activity, and there were no questions. At the completion of the exercise during the Opening Community Share, Shaquel commenting on effect said, “Taking they money and taking they shoes was an effect of bullying.” When the researcher asked him what was the cause he responded, by saying, “being weak.”

Although Robert took control of this part of the Book Club, neither he nor the other members had totally embraced ownership of the Book Club and still looked to the researcher for direction. This was evident by Robert, responding to the researcher’s suggestion that they read to themselves. He asked, “Why we ain’t reading aloud?” the researcher responded by suggesting that a deeper reflection on the material would be made if they read to themselves.

The researcher suggested that the group members look at the table of contents and look at the chapter headings which were represented by pictures. The researcher asked the group what they thought. Shaquel commented that the pictures as opposed to words
helped sometimes. Unfortunately, this line of questioning did not proceed. Ignoring the researcher’s suggestion to read independently, the participants started to skim and leaf through the book.

While leafing through the book, Shaquel uttered, “Dang!” referring to the White police officers on page 28.

This set in motion a line of discussion. Although this topic was socially relevant to the discussion, the researcher was hesitant to expand the discussion. The researcher wanted to see where the participants would take the discussion. Robert being the only White participant uttered, “Why the officers got to be White?”

Deonte giggled, “Because they White.”

Shaquel asked Robert how he felt about that. Although Robert was the only White in the Book Club his relationships with the other participants outside of the Book Club for the researcher were unclear. Robert, however, said that he was fine. The group went back to skimming the book as if nothing had happened. The issues of power was a sub-theme in this study, and it was unclear to the researcher during this interaction that Robert’s choosing to engage and then not to engage was truly an issue of power because of the apparent solidarity all of the participants displayed to each other.

The conversations during this session were dominated by Robert and Shaquel. The back and forth discussions focused on the fights in which the main character was involved. Robert, when making a point, nearly always referred to the illustration on the page and Shaquel would make a comment. In one exchange Robert commented, “He look like he don’t know how to fight.” the researcher asked him why and he said, “Because he looks goofy.”
Shaquel added, “Looks like one of them Chihuahuas.” Shaquel and Robert appeared to be enjoying the violent parts of the book to the point that Shaquel jokingly asked Robert if he wanted to fight.

Robert responded, “Violence solves nothing.”

**Book Club Session 12: Blokhedz**

One participant joined during the reading of *Blokhedz*. The researcher did not introduce this book with a concept map and instead offered the participants the opportunity to preview the book and make predictions. The researcher introduced the book to the members by asking them what they thought the book was about after they looked at the cover. Shaquel said the main character wanted to be a rapper. Deonte did not respond but leafed through the book. Shaquel’s answer did not generate any further discussion. There was no further discussion until Dishawn uttered, “This deep right here!” At this point the discussion turned to the glossary. The other participants turned to the glossary.

Darius asked Dishawn to explain by what he meant by “This deep right here!” Dishawn directed all the participants to the specific spot in the glossary. Dishawn began reading glossary terms that were familiar gang terms. Dishawn said, “That’s five-O, the police. “G” means baby gangster.”


*(Blokhedz, Session twelve, August 5, 2014)*
As he was talking to Serron Devin, remarked “Merk, the act of taking a life, It is the glossary dude. I use some of these words, but I don’t use others like 5-O, macaroni.” The researcher was unfamiliar with the term macaroni but chose to look in the glossary rather than appear ignorant.

This type of interaction rotated equally between Darius, Dishawn and Shaquel for approximately the next two minutes. At this point the researcher interjected and said, “Gentleman we are going to be looking at some imagery, symbolism, connotation, and denotation. The researcher explained the terms and gave examples. However, Devin began to fain illness and uttered, “I want to call my mom, man.” This behavior of Devin would repeat itself each time a written activity was presented. Although it did not persist throughout this entire session, it always appeared during periods of writing.

After a few minutes of moaning and complaining, Devin uttered after looking at the book’s cover, “This Chicago ain’t it?” The researcher said that it was a fictitious city. Devin still made a mental connection with the picture and his understanding of the setting of the story by saying, “I thought this was Chicago. I never heard of these things in Chicago.” Apparently he was not the only participant trying to make a connection with the text.

Shaquel exclaimed, “This is New York, man!”

This comment sparked an image in Devin’s mind because he became excited and said, “This is New York? Wow!”

After a few exchanges between Devin and Shaquel the researcher tried to re-focus the session to examining issues of symbolism and imagery. Again Devin began to moan and wanted to call his mother, and Darius started flipping through the pages stopping and
commenting on text and pictures that caught his interest. Shaquel, while flipping through the pages, made the observation that the pages did not have page numbers. He said that it detracted from his enjoyment of reading the book and that they needed to include page numbers. The researcher said that not having page numbers with the text was an important observation. It was at this point that Darius started to use the pictures as a reference to direct the other participants to the page to which he was referring. This started an exchange between the participants excitedly reading rap lyrics in the text and using the pictures to identify page location and support arguments. In one exchange between Darius, Devin, Deonte, and Shaquel when they were discussing the use of the term “crypt” in the text they started to piece together symbolic references. The text read, “More crypt spots than Michael Jordan theaters.” Seeing an opportunity, the researcher asked them what that meant hoping to get a connection to the concept of death. Darius went to the glossary and said the definition for crypt meant marijuana. Serron chimed in that there were more weed shops than movie theaters. Dishawn exclaimed, “That’s deep” and pronounced that “I’ve got to have this” referring to the book. This interaction of flipping through the pages stopping at text and pictures that caught their interest continued with enthusiasm.

Because they were not reading the text in a traditional manner, the researcher suggested that they were missing important parts to the story and that it would be difficult to connect those points without reading the text in a standard fashion from beginning to end.

Devin displaying his power of choice responded, “We ain’t reading it like that.” The others agreed. The researcher accepted and acknowledged the choice and stepped
back and allowed the Book Club Session to unfold as it would. They continued skimming, continued reading the lyrics that excited them and commenting on the illustrations.

Devin who also was flipping through the book, listening to the comments, and looking at the pictures said, “I can relate to him. Because my brother was part of that stuff, but he got out and went to college. I can relate. I relate to this dude.” Devin’s connection to the text was reflected a connection based upon connections to self and his world. He continued, “This book is a full on movie.” Responding to the quality of the illustrations.

The researcher asked the group this question. “Since you are looking and skimming, when you say, ‘that’s deep, [and] ‘That’s hot’, what do you mean?”

Darius answered, “Because we can relate to them.” This type of connection of text to self was expressed with the previous book as well by Darius and Devin.

The discussion continued with Devin commenting that the main character’s deceased brother’s rap lyrics were attempting to keep the main character out of “the life” also known as “the gang.” All of the participants used the illustrations to support their positions by referring each other to various parts of the text. One exchange was between Dishawn and Deonte discussing the main character’s brother. Deonte had missed a reference concerning the background of the main character’s brother that was essential to understanding that character’s death. Dishawn directed Deonte to the appropriate page using the illustrations. The discussions continued with participants reading rap lyrics and looking at the pictures. As time drew to close, all the participants embraced the book and gave it praise for being relatable.
The researcher asked if they would have the same feeling if the book did not have pictures. There was a brief pause and then they responded, “No.” in near unison.

**Book Club Session 16: Blokhedz**

This Book Club session was the fifth meeting discussing *Blokhedz*. For this book and session, the participants again wrestled with the concept of symbolism. Since they had previously skimmed the book, deeper reflections appeared to supersede random reading and responding to the rap lyrics. Darius started the session by opening with what he perceived as the crux of the book’s character. He said, “His brother died, and the reason he died was because of him. However, he still didn’t let that interfere with what he wanted to do. He got himself together despite all the beef that was going on around him and with all of the other characters in this book. He set that aside and focused on himself, and it helped him in the end.”

The researcher asked the group, “He was supposed to be the hero in the book, right? He loved his brother and his brother gave him the medallion. What was the significance of the medallion?”

This created a discussion between Dishawn, Shaquel, and Darius. They attempted to link the importance of the medallion to the entire story. Since they had not read the book from beginning to end in the standard fashion, they recalled what they remembered from their skimming. Dishawn said to the group, “The medallion saved his brother from getting his heart pierced.”

Once the medallion was in the main character’s possession, Darius made the observation that the main character’s brother appeared in the form of a ghost.
Shaquel, looking at the picture, commented that the main character when he had the medallion had power and Shaquel said, “It was something about his hand and about that little lion thing.”

Both Shaquel and Darius immediately came to the same conclusion that the medallion was a symbol of his brother’s strength passed on to him. They surmised that the main character’s environment was like a jungle. It was his jungle and since his brother was king it was like being king of the jungle like a lion. They put the idea that the medallion saved his brother’s heart from getting pierced, with the idea that his brother was a lion together and concluded that the medallion was the lion’s heart.

Despite this revelation, Dishawn still wrestled with the idea and said thinking out loud to the group, “The lion’s heart. So like I’m saying Konz had to be the lion. No wait, he had to be the heart and the medallion had to be the lion.”

Dishawn supported his argument by saying to the group as he read from the text, “I don’t know if everyone has got to this point but the text says, ‘The cost was heavy’ because he lost his brother and had lost the medallion.”

This ignited another discussion trying to determine the significance of the main character’s relationship to his brother. At this point they established that the medallion represented his brother’s strength or “The Lion’s Heart” in a philosophical way. Next they wrestled with the brother’s name. They discovered a significance in the name as a reference to the powers his brother’s medallion bestowed on him.

Serron was the first to catch it. He directed the group to a place in the book where the main character was magically removing bullets from an injured person. Serron read, “Make sure Giant gets these to remind him every choice has a Konzaquence.” This was
the main character’s brother’s name. Shaquel exclaimed, “That’s his brother’s name and a coward dies a thousand times a soldier but one. His brother went out like a soldier!”

Dishawn appeared to have a major connection and went further by saying, “This book is scaring me. I swear to god. It’s real, too real.” The researcher stepped further aside at this point allowing for more opportunities for the Book Club participants to exercise their own control of outcomes. The researcher provided facilitator input as required and not fully relinquishing control

**Book Club Session 20: Static Shock**

The participants arrived and distributed the books without any input from the researcher. They sat down and immediately began to flip through the pages as they had done with the previous books. Serron initiated the discussion He directed the groups’ attention to the main characters picture on the front cover. He said, “He looks like Wayne Carter.” Wayne Carter was a familiar rapper whose stage name was Lil Wayne. Darius and the others agreed with this and continued to flip through the pages.

Alonzo was curious about graphic novels and asked the researcher, “What is the difference between a comic book and a graphic novel?” the researcher explained the difference. The researcher said to Alonzo, “Good question. Here’s the difference. A comic book is a serial meaning the story continues every week. It’s kind of like a movie with episode 1, 2, and 3. A graphic novel is like a regular book that has a beginning, a middle, and an end. That’s the difference between them.” Alonzo, responded, “So it continues?” referring to the comic book definition. The researcher agreed.

Devin during this discussion told the group, “This book’s kinda shaky. It may be a good book, but I don’t think I’d like this one. It is probably interesting if you read the
story, but this is a real cartoon.” There was no comment, but the participants appeared disinterested in this book to the researcher. The researcher asked the group after observing their disinterest, “You liked the other books, and you have hardly touched this one. Tell the researcher what you like.”

Dishawn spoke first and said, “I like books that have something that pertains to our life, like Blokhedz. That was fake but at the same time it was real because some of the details in there we could relate to.”

Darius shouted, “Yummy!”

Devin followed saying, “Yeah Yummy was crispy.”

Alonso commenting on Yummy said, “The only part that made me cry was the dude in the casket. I had a flashback of my coach. I read that book, and I seen his face.”

Devin finished the exchange about the book Yummy by saying, “He was a cool little dude, but he, like everybody, he got a bad side and a good side.”

Despite repeated efforts to get this new book into discussion it was apparent that this book was unpopular.

**Book Club Session 21: V for Vendetta**

Darius took control of the session from the moment the participants arrived. Darius told the group, “Look at your book. V is what number?” The question was not immediately answered because Devin was disappointed that he was not being released from custody and was pouting, and his situation was dominating the discussion. Darius assured Devin that everything was fine. This calmed Devin, and the group returned to discussing the book. Darius directed the group to the section where V was having a discussion with Lady Liberty. The group read the section, but it appeared that Dishawn
and Serron were unfamiliar with idea of personification because Dishawn asked if the statue in the panel was talking back to V.

Serron said, “Yeah.”

Deonte chuckled and said to both of them, “She’s a statue dude.”

Like with the other books, the participants chose to skim the book rather than read it closely. The researcher asked if they knew what was going on. Dishawn responded by saying, “V, he didn’t like justice. When he was younger he thought it was cool, like but when he got older he found out what it really was, and he blew it up because he didn’t like it.”

Darius was confused by the layout of the book and said, “Sometimes I get lost when I’m reading. Like what is he talking about? You don’t know until you get back to it.”

The participants looked at the pictures rather than read to draw conclusions. Darius directed the groups’ attention to the church scene. I pointed out the words, “One race.” To evoke a response.

Dishawn, exclaimed, “They racists! One race!”

Deonte’ responding to this revelation said, “I don’t like V anymore,”

And Darius asked, “That’s what V’s about?”

Book Club Session 24: Last Meeting

This was the last Book Club session. The researcher asked the participants what they liked, disliked, and what suggestions would they would make if they were to participate in another Book Club. All of their comments were positive in terms of their experience. *Blockhedz* was the most favored book by the Book Club. This point was
articulated by Devin and supported by the rest of the group. Darius wanted to read a book about the Illuminati. The researcher asked why. He said, “Because it’s stuff like we just get clues about. We don’t know what’s really going on. I wanted to find out what it meant and why all of this stuff had been happening. The signs and all that stuff.” the researcher asked why. He then responded, “What Christopher Wallace [rapper Notorious B.I.G.] has said. The World Trade Center blew up after he died and how did he know it was going to blow up and when you fold up the twenty and fifty dollar bill it shows the Twin Towers being blown up.” This started a discussion among the other participants about conspiracy theories that had been advanced by the rap artists they listened to.

The researcher asked the participants based upon their experiences with books with just text and graphic novels, which format they would prefer to learn from. Dishawn did not hesitate and said, “The graphic novel.” Devin agreed. Darius added, “Because we understand more. How it happened and why.” The researcher asked for more as to why, “By looking at the pictures?”

Darius responded, “Yes.”

The researcher then asked the participants what books they would like to read in graphic novel format. Devin, Dishawn, and Darius named books they would like to read in graphic novel form. Devin said he wanted to read the book Monster. This book by Walter Dean Myers is being adapted into a graphic novel. Darius said he wanted to read graphic novel books about the Illuminati. Devin was not specific with titles or subject matter, but, Devin, Dishawn, and Darius all wanted to read graphic novels that they could learn things from.
Themes

The first question guiding this study was, “How do recidivistic youth discuss graphic novels in a Book Club?” Listed below is a qualitative breakdown of the findings pertaining to the way in which the participants discussed the graphic novels. The themes generated from qualitative analysis were as follows:

- Scanning and skimming versus traditional reading;
- Power and authority;
- Fit of Illustrations;
- Connections;
- Reading Attitude; and,
- Fit of text and language.

These themes represented elements of the graphic novel that promoted participant discussion. An introduction to each theme was provided. The analysis used to answer this question built on the data presented for research question 1.

Scanning and Skimming Versus Traditional Reading

A feature of graphic novels is “visual permanence” (Yang, 2008, p. 188). The words and pictures contained in graphic novels do not move and are fixed on a page, allowing readers to choose how quickly or slowly they wish to read and also the degree to which they should attend to the words and pictures. Graphic novels give the illusion of time passing, but they leave the rate of change up to the reader. Yang likens this feature of graphic novels to being able to rewind and revisit information (or conversely to keep on going) which is not unrelated to the re-reading students can do with more traditional print-based texts (Botzakis, 2009).
This idea was supported and reinforced by Robert suggesting to use sticky notes to mark pages and be able refer to them later for discussion. This marking of tabs allowed the participants to make connections and fill in the blanks in meaning using pictures as evidence such as when Robert determined that the girl Yummy shot was not necessarily a friend he liked but someone he knew and liked. This was evidenced by the following discussion.

Malcolm: You look at the pictures after they called him little killer he looked scared. He was scared cause he killed the little girl. That’s when he started looking nervous. He like he didn’t do it on purpose. See he probably wanted to kill the other dude, but he didn’t mean to kill the girl. Like you said that was probably the girl he liked and whatever. So why would he want to kill somebody he liked?

Researcher: You said it was his girlfriend?

Robert: It was a girl he liked.

(Yummy, Session 3, May 20, 2014)

Robert was responsible for encouraging the scanning and skimming that became the preferred way of discussing the graphic novels. Initially it was Robert’s request to read the graphic novels in a round robin fashion, but, during Book Club session 3 Robert asked the researcher if they could use sticky notes to mark pages to refer to later if there was something that caught their interest, and the researcher agreed. From that point as a group the Book Club discussions were based on skimming, scanning, and commenting on sections that caught their interest.
Robert, Tyrone, and Malcolm continued this back and forth discussion as evidenced in a discussion between Robert, Tyrone, and Malcolm shortly after Robert made the suggestions about the sticky notes during Book Club session 3.

Robert: He kept trying to prove himself and the more he tried to prove himself the more trouble he got. If he just ran from the place they probably could have helped him. He ran from uh? (looking through the book) I don’t remember what page it was on. He ran though. He kept getting into fights basically trying to prove that nobody could punk him.

Malcolm: This is his first mistake when you go back to here. When he was showing his tattoo and the other guy was tightening it up.

Researcher: Tyrone, what do you think?

Tyrone: I think, I feel that they were trying to use him and protect him at the same time. He was a kid.

Researcher: He never had a childhood? Is that what you’re saying?

Tyrone: Yeah. That gun was his first present. They didn’t treat him like a kid so the kid was gone in him.

(Yummy, Session 3, May 20, 2014)

This approach to discussing the text continued throughout the duration of the study. Foregoing the “round robin” approach to reading they chose earlier, the scanning and skimming approach commenting on specific parts that captured their interest appeared to enhance the Book Club discussions. Later it was explained to the researcher this way. The researcher asked the group, “I think you guys are getting way ahead of yourself. You’re missing important parts. You’ve got to read it straight up.
Malcolm responded by saying, “We ain’t reading it like that.”

In a later Book Club session, the researcher raised the question about skimming versus reading from cover to cover because the participants continued to scan and skim. Since they were doing this more frequently with the graphic novel *Blokhedz*, the researcher asked if there was a benefit to reading the raps first rather than the book.

Serron answered the question this way.

Seron: Basically we read the whole book scanning it.

Researcher: Is there any benefit to reading the raps first or skimming it like you’re doing it rather than like in a normal classroom where you read from the beginning?

Darius: Yeah.

Shaquel: It’s better. Like you get into it.

*(Blokhedz, Session 15, August 26, 2014)*

Upon reflection of Shaquel’s answer, the answer appeared to support the connection between language and comprehension. If words are a label for a concept then the rap songs reflected a concept the participants understood thus explaining Shaquel’s answer when he said, “It’s better. Like you get it.”

**Book Club Power and Authority**

This theme included comments and actions that participants made regarding their power and authority when discussing graphic novels. Although this was a Book Club and all participants were considered equals, the researcher’s presence initially altered that perception of equality. The researcher purposely arranged the meeting room for the first three sessions with the researcher facing directly across from the participants (Figure 3).
The researcher arranged it that way only because it allowed the researcher the greatest vantage position for interaction. Robert subsequently kept this arrangement when setting up the room during sessions 4-6.
Figure 2.

*Furniture arrangement prior to participant weekly arrival for Book Club*

![Diagram showing furniture arrangement prior to participant weekly arrival for Book Club.]

Figure 3.

*Furniture arrangement and participant location to represent Book Club sessions 1 - 6*

![Diagram showing furniture arrangement and participant location to represent Book Club sessions 1 - 6.]

80
In later sessions, there were other shifts in the perception of authority based on alliances between the participants. Darius and Devin positioned themselves during Book Club sessions 8 to 24 at the end of the table. Darius sat on the far side according to Figure 4. Darius and Devin’s alliance challenged Darius’s assumed authority. This was evidenced by this dialogue during Book Club session 15 during the discussion of *Blokhedz*.

Darius: Okay, the first thing we’re going to do is go to the glossary. Go to the glossary you all. You all ain’t following directions. He gave me permission to step you all. What are you all doing?

Dishawn: What are you doing?

Researcher: He is trying to get you guys started.

Deonte: Can’t even get the book you all.
Researcher: You’ve got the book. They’re just messing with you.

Deonte: Alright.

Darius: Everyone go to the glossary.

Devin: The glossary? Who is you, the director?

Darius: You all ain’t got to read it out loud. Just read.

*(Blokhedz, Session 15, August 26, 2014)*

The dynamics of authority and the influence exerted on the discussions was not simple. The participants came to the Book Club sessions to interact and discuss the books as equals. They had their knowledge, but they presumed that the researcher knew more than them as evidenced when Darius said to the group that the researcher had given him permission to “step” them meaning to keep them in line. The researcher gave no such permission; it was Darius’s impression as to how he perceived the Book Club was run. The researcher was perpetuated this perception by acting in a manner that appeared to be teacher-to-student when the researcher said, “He’s just trying to get you started.” For example, during Book Club sessions one to three, Robert instinctively looked to the researcher for guidance and assurance which the researcher automatically gave. He asked for permission to read *Yummy* out loud in a round robin fashion. The researcher agreed. When making a comment, he would raise his hand waiting for acknowledgement as if in class. After the initial Book Club meetings, he would arrange the table and chairs and have the researcher sitting across from the participants as if the researcher were still in the position of authority as in Figure 4.

Learning was not exclusively a one-way street. The researcher learned as much form the participants as they learned from the researcher. As Raney (2003) points out,
students may learn better or differently when teachers do not exact their authority, at least in a conventional sense.

Devin and Darius were already members of the Book Club, but the next shift in this perception of authority came during Book Club session 8, when Dishawn, Serron, Shaquel, and Deonte joined the Book Club. They were starting *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun*. The researcher wrote in his field notes the following observation. “Robert and Tyrone arrived together. Darius and Devin arrived together about 30 seconds later. Robert and Tyrone sat together on one side of the table as they had done from the first sessions. Since they always arrived together and sat together and supported each other’s comments, it suggested to the researcher that they supported each other outside of the Book Club as at least supportive acquaintances. The researcher welcomed them to Book Club and asked Robert to explain the concept. The researcher asked Robert to explain the concept because he had demonstrated leadership in the Book Club when he suggested using sticky notes and reading the graphic novels in a round robin manner. He said in a robotic fashion, “We read the book and talk about it.” He was short and to the point; there were no questions or further discussions. Devin was sitting on the corner next to Tyrone and next to the researcher. No one was reading the book but all were flipping through the pages looking at the pictures.

Robert’s introduction was largely dismissed because of apparent preoccupation with looking at the new book and Robert’s seeming lack of enthusiasm. Robert was somewhat nonchalant about the episode. However, the researcher perceived a shift in authority. Robert had run the Book Club prior to this new group. Devin and Darius did not listen to Robert. The shift in authority and power appeared to be shifting away from
Robert toward Devin and Darius. It appeared that the relationship between Devin and Darius was similar to the relationship demonstrated by Robert and Tyrone with this observed exception. Where Robert was focused on the Book Club, Devin and Darius engaged in discussions that dealt with life on the unit, other people, and their time left in the center which made Robert appear to disengage in trying to direct the flow of the Book Club. (Figure 4).

**Fit of Illustrations**

This theme included comments that participants made regarding the illustrations in graphic novels. Comments represented the ways in which the participants used the illustrations to discuss and assign meaning to the text. Connections to and the use of the illustrations in the graphic novels supported Book Club discussions and was the most common of the themes

- Scanning and skimming versus traditional reading;
- Power and authority;
- Fit of illustrations;
- Connections;
- Reading attitude; and,
- Fit of text and language.

- The significance of this theme was made evident by the frequency of illustrations being referred to in the Book Club sessions. Following a brief introduction to the illustration theme, the researcher discuss two recurring subthemes used to organize the findings. The sub themes were: quality of illustrations and connection to self and world.
The participants’ engagement with the visuals in graphic novels was supported by a previous study which revealed that color visuals increase willingness to read by up to 80% (Burmark, 2002).

The Book Club participants’ discussion of the graphic novels was partially examined by how many times they engaged with the text and the illustrations during their discussions. The illustration discussion accounted for 66% and the text accounted for 34% of that discussion. This analysis was juxtaposed against the group dynamics to confirm or refute the importance of text or illustrations in the reading discussion of the participants. What follows is the story.

Illustration Quality. Graphic novels today would not be possible without innovations in print technology such as low cost, high resolution, full-color production at the level required for exquisite graphics (Drucker, 2008).

The participant’s discussions were influenced by how they perceived various illustrations. For example during a discussion of the graphic novel *Fist, Stick Knife, Gun*, there was this exchange.

Donte: This dude ugly. This dude right here.

Researcher: Why?

Shaquel: Because that’s how they drew him.

Researcher: Why’s that?

Devin: Cause that black and white right there is ugly.

Researcher: It’s ugly?

Devin: It’s a good book, but it’s still ugly.

Researcher: So what makes it ugly?
Devin: See how it is all sketched up. It’s like somebody just sketched it up. It ain’t like that *Blokhedz*. That’s just all the way movie.

*(Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun Last Book Club Meeting, 11/04/2014)*

This opened a discussion about graphic novels and the illustrations and paper quality.

Researcher: Is everyone in agreement with that?

All: Yes.

Researcher: So you are saying that the color in the graphic novels needs to be more like that in *Blokhedz*?

All: Yes.

*(Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun Last Book Club Meeting, 11/04/2014)*

*Blokhedz*’ paper was high gloss and the other novels had lower quality paper. Although *Static Shock* was a color graphic novel the participants shunned the book and barely discussed it.

Researcher: What about the paper in the graphic novels other than *Blokhedz*?

Devin: I hate that kind of paper. It’s ugly.

Researcher: You said *Blokhedz* was, “Movie all the way” What did you mean by that?

Devin: It’s like nobody drew it. Looked like it was on a computer.

Researcher: You liked *Blokhedz*? Movie all the way?

All: Movie all the way!

*(Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun Last Book Club Meeting, November 11, 2014)*

This discussion addressed the participant’s perceptions of illustrations and paper quality and the impact this had on interest in reading which supports Burmark (2003).
The greater the perception of quality in the case of Blokhedz, the greater the discussion. The lesser the perception of quality such as their dislike of Static Shock the less their interest in reading and discussion. With more and more graphic novels being published by award winning illustrations in black and white or color and what the researcher had seen as a characteristic of the graphic novel for these participant’s discussion, the researcher needed to know their perspective.

Researcher: Here’s a thought I want to run past you. A lot of the graphic novels they are making now are in black and white rather than in color. Would you prefer that they do those in color?

All: Color.

(Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun, Session 24, November 4, 2014)

These findings, regarding the illustrations support findings of other literary researchers and theorists. Frey and Fisher (2008) found that the visuals in graphic novels enabled students to have positive reading experiences which made them more likely to want to read.

**Connections**

During an early Book Club session there was a discussion to determine the main character’s motivation in an accidental homicide. Malcolm addressed the other members of the Book Club. He directed the members to the illustrations to make his argument.

Malcolm: You look at the pictures after they called him little killer he looked scared. He was scared cause he killed the little girl that’s when he started looking nervous. He like, he didn’t do it on purpose. See he probably wanted to kill the other dude, but he didn’t mean to kill
the girl. Like you said, that was probably the girl he liked and whatever. So why would he want to kill somebody he liked?

(Yummy, Session 3, May 20, 2014)

Malcolm was using the illustrations as a vehicle to link pieces of the comprehension puzzle together as demonstrated in his comment, “So why would he kill someone he liked.” This example supports Flynt and Brozo (2010) and Frey and Fisher (2008) who indicated that students today are constantly exposed to visual images and that literacy now becomes an integral act of making meaning using still or moving images. Malcolm made comprehension connections, determined the importance or relevance of information, and processed it using visual images.

A similar discussion during the same graphic novel occurred with Robert, the only Caucasian member of the group, who made a personal observation about the illustrations. This lead to a discussion among the participants of race and police. This discussion did not extend greatly beyond Robert’s comment, but it did trigger perceptions of police and race relationships. Robert asked the group, “Why the officers got to be White?” This question generated other comments by the other members who were also using the same illustration to make their point.

Shaquel: Cause they play you. Look at they face, look at they face. Their eyes said one thing but their mannerisms said another.

Robert: But why they got to be White?

Devin: Because they White. You know - White.

(Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun, Session 8, July 8, 2014)
Deeper non-recurring themes from the selected graphic novels were highlighted in participant discussion, while offering a rich context to explore concepts related to race and diversity. Shaquel’s contribution to the discussion again reinforces by integrating both the text and the illustrations augment Flynt and Brozo (2010) who argue visual literacy can lead to improvement in the expression of ideas. During a discussion about *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun*, Shaquel engaged Robert in a discussion about fighting by referring to the illustrations. The interaction suggests a connection to a fund of knowledge that defines strength, weakness, bravery, and cowardice.

Shaquel: Okay, look. What’s his name Robert, the little dude? See look, he thought he was friends with David the big dude. Then he came over there and said, “Are you friends with him?” Ah, you scared I thought you was tough. I ain’t scared I lied. Then he start looking at him. Then he said, “I got to prove myself to him.” I thought we was just cool. But now you going hit with him now.

Robert: Dang. He crying!

(Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun, Session 8, July 8, 2014)

The discussion continued with Shaquel chuckling but saying that despite having been hit, the character was tough. This discussion was made without reference to text. As they flipped through the illustration panels, Dishawn made another comment about the illustrations, “He about to do something.”

The use of the illustrations to support their perception again suggested that personal perceptions of weak and strong were being imposed on the character. This idea was reinforced when Shaquel said:
Shaquel: He didn’t even want to fight. That’s a shame.

Deonte: He act like he fight all the time. He wrestle. He didn’t even swing.

Dishawn: Soft!

(Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun, Session 8, July 8, 2014)

The participants continued to refer to the illustration supporting the theme of illustration fit. The participants used the illustrations to make connections to their self and world view. During a discussion of Blokhedz, Deonte was speaking to Devin about a dice game being played in the book. This generated a discussion about the game. The participants were familiar with the dice game, and there was an attraction to it being played out in the book.

Devin: Ah, Celo. You ever played Celo?

Serron: I don’t know how to play that. I play regular dice, man.

(Blokhedz, Session 15, August 26, 2014)

Deonte explained the game and Darius not knowing the page location exclaimed, “Ah, that’s deep! Let me see that. Let me see your book Devin.” During a discussion of Yummy, Robert and Tyrone had made reference to the book needing more color. They explained this by saying it was a way for them to distinguish gang affiliations. Robert wrote, “Needs more color.” The data shows that color remained an important aspect of the discussion.

Dishawn: At the bottom! Dude. This crazy. You got to pay attention just to make sure that’s what they’re telling.
Serron: He got gold teeth!
Darius: That’s deep too because his mouth never opens.
Dishawn: You can’t see the top of his teeth.
Shaquel: The doors open. That’s somebody’s face.
Dishawn: That’s crazy. I thought he sent a little ghost dog. That’s somebody’s face.
Darius: Skeleton!
Dishawn: You got to look. You got to pay attention.

(Blokhedz, Session seventeen, September 2, 2014)

Reading graphic novels, like reading comics in general, requires the reader to make connections between images set apart by panels and gutters—the empty spaces between panels (McCloud, 1994). Such reading requires constant inference making, as readers have to assume that actions are occurring between the panels. When students assume action takes place in the time it takes them to move from one panel to another, they are engaged in higher level thinking skills oftentimes without even knowing it. This was evidenced by this discussion between the participants during a discussion of V for Vendetta.

Serron: He got a whole lot of mysteries and flashbacks in this book
Darius: And sometimes I get lost when I’m reading. Likke what is he talking about until you get back to it. Then here she comes again.
She want to be a “V” girl.
Dishawn: I guess he said, “You kinda like you got to learn more to hang with him. You got to get used to this. You got to watch me a couple of times before I put you on to it.

*(V for Vendetta, Book Club session twenty-two, October 21, 2014)*

Making inferences from images is typically easier for students, and that skill can be introduced and taught using graphic novels (Frey & Fischer, 2004) and later revisited for more traditional text reading. What can be difficult for students to do with simple text can be more easily accomplished when reading visually oriented materials? (Botzakis, 2009)

Serron: He looks like Wayne Carter.

Researcher: Who?

Devin: Shock. Wayne Carter the rapper.

Serron: I’m just talking about his face.

Darius: Oh yeah. It do.

*(Static Shock, Session twenty, September 30, 2014)*

Another discussion occurred during the same discussion of V for Vendetta where the participants are trying to determine the relationship between the main character and the object he is speaking to.

Serron: Yeah he went and got him in a suit and took him to the gallery. It’s a gallery or something they’re in. He made him look at all the little dolls while he burnt them up. Exploded them then the only thing he know about.

Dishawn: She talking back?
Serron: Yeah.

Chishaun: She’s a statue, dude.

*(V for Vendetta, Session twenty two, October 21, 2014)*

The participants’ discussions back and forth discussing the illustrations and the text appeared to reinforce the idea that these types of books were something that this group of readers wanted to read and engage with. The ideas that they wrestled with included ideas such as personification and loyalty although it was not clearly spelled out supports McClouds (1994) assertion that inferences when reading graphic novels suggests more critical thinking without them even knowing it.

Researcher: That’s great. In the Book Club we have been reading and discussing graphic novels. You want to learn about the Illuminati. Based upon your experiences with books with just text and graphic novels, which format do you think is better to learn from?

Dishawn: The graphic novel.

Devin: Yeah man.

Researcher: Why is that?

Darius: Because we understand more. How it happened and why it happened and when did it happen.

Researcher: By looking back at the pictures?

Darius: Yeah.

*(Last Book Club, Session twenty-four, November 4, 2014)*

Participants commented on the illustrations and text of the graphic novels connecting the images and words to themselves and their world view. For example,
Robert questioned why all the police officers in *Fist, Stick, Knife Gun* had to be White?”

To which Malcolm responded, “Because they are.”

Early on, the Book Club participants would discuss the graphic novels by making connections to themselves or the world. One of these connections was made in an exchange with Malcolm when the group was talking about how they felt about the book *Yummy*.

Malcolm: I feel about the book, I feel he wasn’t given no opportunity. He grew up in the streets. He grew up in a family with a whole bunch of people, so he probably didn’t get noticed for real. They know he was there, but he probably didn’t get noticed for real. So he had to go find some people where he felt he belonged. It was the only way he was going to get seen. So he did whatever it took to be seen because he got so many people living in the house it draw attention from him. He was young. You know young people need attention. That’s what makes them themselves. They grow up off that attention. The only attention he was getting was from those people in the streets.

(*Yummy, Session 3, May 20, 2014*)

This discussion continued when Malcolm and Robert discussed the illustration panel where Yummy was being initiated into the gang. Malcolm pointed out to Robert that Yummy had cut his hand as part of the initiation. Robert made a connection stating what he perceived the action to represent.

Robert: Blood Brothers.
Malcolm: Yeah, but, you know you can get AIDS from that. You can catch some serious diseases. You could die from it. He say he do anything even death for the gang. So they going to put him to the test. They going to try him on that. That’s how it goes anyways. You with a gang they want to see where you at, your head. You come from a gang they want to see if you a fighter, a shooter, or what. They put him up to that. They gave him no limits everything. They wanted him to steal cars, get money, kill people for ‘em. Like they said he was a pup. Train him for whatever you want him to do.

(Yummy, Session 3, May 20, 2014)

Malcolm upon reflection about what Yummy was experiencing answered a question the researcher asked as a member of the group. The researcher asked if Yummy joining the gang was a mistake. This generated another discussion and a connection to self and world that appeared to reflect their realities and perils of gang life.

The discussions of Yummy showed a deeper connection with the participants and real life. The participants made connections to real life events, themselves and consequences of situations that the main character found himself in. This was evidenced during a discussion of Yummy during Book Club session 3.

Malcolm Yeah, it was a mistake even getting involved with that life. Like that was one of the questions I wrote down. Why go to the streets rather than a sport where you can get attention and let out your aggression. Boxing, football, basketball. You can always do
something like that - sports. You can do something positive. You
don’t always have to do something negative. That attention. You
don’t need all that negative attention.

Robert:  He kept trying to prove himself and the more he tried to prove
himself, the more trouble he got. If he just ran from the place, they
probably could have helped him. He ran from uh? I don’t
remember what page it was on. He ran though. He kept getting into
fights basically trying to prove that nobody could punk him.

Tyrone: Yeah, he didn’t have anyone to depend on, they was nothing but
bad niggas.

Robert: Yeah, I agree with that. Sounds reasonable. I seen a lot of people
like that who didn’t have any friends.

Malcolm: I tried to my get my little brother from going out there but he
insist. He just kept going there every time. He be out there in the
back streets with them other little dudes and then, “Your brother
out here, your brother out here.” I see my little brother, he got the
bandanna on. Stupid dude. I told you not to be a part of that. Then
they tell me your brother got jumped in. He over here now. I tell
ya, no he ain’t, my brother ain’t from over here. Yeah he is. My
granny going to beat him up and he ain’t going to be from there no
more. He ain’t never from over here.
Reseacher: Okay is this kinda like your situation trying to keep your brother out of the gang? You were giving support. So if Yummy had gotten your kind of support would he have joined the gang?

Malcolm: It’s his decision. He wants the support but he likes the negative things he’s doing.” To which Tyrone added “Negative stuff’s easy.” Malcolm interjected, “That’s the easy way. It probably a fun thing. Negative stuff can be fun at times. Sometimes you got to face the consequence of it.

Robert agreed.

*(Yummy, Book Club session 3, May 20, 2014)*

Malcolm continued the discussion and made a statement that the researcher heard spoken in the juvenile court system in terms of juvenile delinquency and punishment.

Malcolm: I think they use them because he young. He not smart yet. He smart. He just don’t know about consequences and how things would turn out. Like what was said before. They ain’t really charging kids. So he think he can do whatever because he young and ain’t going to get in much trouble.

Devin concluded this part of the discussion:

Devin: Yummy, he was scared. You can’t be fried [high] and be a little boy. You got to be fried all the time but he was just fried with his friends. You got to fried everywhere you go. And with people putting things in his head he just did something wrong. You don’t be doing that in no gang, man. Nobody told him that ain’t cool.
Everybody. This ain’t the stuff you should be doing. He didn’t have any positive role models.

(Yummy, Session 3, May 20, 2014)

The following discussion of *Blokhedz* reinforced Borzo and Mayville’s (2012) position that engaged readers were more likely to read. This was evidenced by the frequency of positive comments made about personal acquisition of this book.

Devin: This book man, I be liking this book.
Researcher: You like this book?
Deonte: I don’t even like reading, bro, and I like this book.
Devin: Ah, I can relate to him. Because my brother was part of that stuff, but, he got out and went to college. And that’s basically what he’s telling him. You got talent. You was born with that, and you got to get it, bro. And I was thinking. He said Blak you got a talent that most people would kill for.
Researcher: Why are you liking those particular raps?
Serron: Because we can relate to them.
Devin: Reading that book, reading that book (laughing). Ah yeah, I can really relate to this book.
Devin: This deep!
Researcher: Why was it deep?
Devin: It’s deep (chuckling). You can relate to it like everyday things.
Darius: Yeah, this deep!
Dishawn: Where at?
Darius: Right here.

Devin: (now reading with everyone is listening) “…So keep my brother’s name out your mouth…I’m putting your brain on sale because I’m taking half off.” (chuckling)

Darius: That’s deep!

All: (in unison) I’m putting your brain on sale because I’m taking half off.

Darius: That’s deep!

Devin: I gotta have that book.

Dishawn: I just want to read the rest of this rap dude. I ain’t playing his time around. I just waiting for the time you ride my boy and the day that you pop my chain.

Shaquel: You cannot rap dude. Hey look, Serron. I’m Blak, I’m a rapper. I got rap for days.

Devin: You ain’t really Blak. Now this real you keep making this sound.

Serron: I don’t rap. I do action.

Devin: Don’t take it personal. I’m just askin.’

Serron: Oh.

Dishawn: Come on, look. It’s true, look. It’s like my uncle.

Serron: This is a really good book, man. You can really relate because this stuff really happens in the world.

Devin: *Blokhedz*, I could relate to a book like that.

Dishawn: Deonte, Ah, Celoe. You ever played Celoe?
Devin: Who’s playing it?

Deonte: In the book.

Devin: Oh, you remember that Serron?

Serron: I don’t know how to play that. I play regular dice, man.

Deonte: If you got two of the same. That’s your point. You feel me?

Darius: Ah, that’s deep. Let me see that. Let me see your book, Devin.

(Blokhedz, Session sixteen, September 2, 2014)

The discussion above is evidence of how the participants made connections to self and world. The dice game Celoe is a popular urban dice game. Rap is a language and musical form that has its roots in urban life. This familiarity with what is being discussed in the graphic novel is evidence that the group as well as individual participants used the occasion to generate discussion amongst themselves about the book.

The importance of being able to identify with the subject matter or having prior knowledge of the ideas was reflected in the following exchange of the participants.

Darius: My, my impression of it is, it’s a, it’s um, a good book based on like how we are,) you know, like everyone can’t be a rapper. Some people have that talent. And, and that talent, like what I’m saying is like talent is powerful when you speak the truth. So it touched many hearts. That’s why I like this book cuz, um, stuff can be saved. It’s true and stuff in the book like, that’s in the book happens like every day. And uh, how his brother died. I had a same situation like him. His brother died and the reason he died was because of him. And then later on he still didn’t let that interfere
with what he wanted to do. And he um, he got himself together despite all the beef he had going on, um, with all the other characters in this book. He still set that aside and focused on himself, and it still helped him in the end at the end of the story. So, that’s what I liked about it.

Serron: This right here when he took the bullets out of the little kid’s heart, he said, he told the little dude his brother, “Make sure Giant gets these.” “For what?” “To remind him every choice you make has a Konsequence.”

Shaquel: Ah, his brother’s name.

Dishawn: This book’s scaring me. I swear to god. This book’s scaring me though.

Darius: He told his little brother to live for him. Write words.

Shaquel: (reading) “A coward dies a thousand times a soldier but one.” His brother went out like a soldier.

Researcher: His brother was a soldier?

Dishawn: This book scary, man. It’s real, it’s too real.

Deonte: It ended sweet. It said, “Anything you do has a Konsequence.”

That was tough.

Researcher: Everyone has input. That’s what you’re doing. You say I like this, I don’t like this, change this it makes the book better. What are your thoughts?

Devin: You got to make it pertain to people’s lives.
Dishawn: Something that pertains to our life like *Blokhedz*. That was fake, but at the same time it was real because some of the details in there we could relate to.

Darius: Like *Yummy* too.

Devin: Yeah, *Yummy* was crispy.

Alonzo: The only part that made me cry was the dude in the casket. I saw my coach flashback. I read that book and I seen his face.”

Devin: It was sad though. He was a cool little dude but he like everybody he got a bad side and a good side.

*(Blokhedz, Session twenty, September 30, 2014)*

The participants not only showed that they made connections with non-fiction graphic novels that but also with graphic novels that were fiction. The connecting elements were relatability and a connection the participants had to both a self and a world view.

**Fit of Text and Language**

This theme included all of the comments that the participants made regarding their excitement and desire to read sections of the graphic novels that depicted familiar language coupled with conflict. Sub themes included use of participant vocabulary. The participants in the study were recidivistic male adolescents, and their connection with titles and themes consistently reflected a desire to read text that contained language and conflict that reflected their world view. The participants referred repeatedly to conflict and language - oriented scenes in the graphic novels. Smith and Wilhelm (2002) noted that emotional and high-impact story lines engaged interest in reading. Gorman (2003)
wrote that graphic novels that offered fast-paced action, and conflict, made them an ideal choice. The language used in the graphic novel was similar to the language the participants used in their daily life. The discussion about Blokhedz between the researcher and Darius supports this.

Darius: Can he spit?
Researcher: What?
Darius: Can he spit?
Researcher: I don’t know. (The researcher did not know expression)
Darius: (chuckle) Do you know what I’m talking about?
Researcher: No I don’t.
Darius: (laughing) Can you rap? If you didn’t know you should have asked me.

(Blokhedz, Session twenty-one, October 5, 2014)

The previous exchange the researcher had with Darius illustrated the idea of Third Space (Gutiérrez, 2008) in which there was a middle ground in which between the teacher and the student where each had something to contribute and something to learn. At this stage of the study the researcher was seen more as both facilitator and participant and student’s funds of knowledge were being acknowledged as valuable assets. This allowed for the interaction and discussion when it came to text language as well as personal language.

It is said that words are a label for a concept and in order for comprehension to be achieved those words must be translated within the context of how they are used. For example if a person read the sentence, “She played the bass until the sting broke” and the
sentence, “She played the string until the bass broke,” there would be confusion in interpretation based upon the context in which the bass was used. To a fisherman the sentence would have perfect meaning within his context. To a musician the same would be true. This connection between personal vocabulary and the language used in the text was evidenced in the discussion of *Blokhedz*.

Devin: Welcome to the jungle where good die king. Ah, he be snapping dude

Dishawn: They don’t care about you. They care if you got a spine cause they got guns to tear it out of you.” (rap from text) Yes, yes, my grand, that’s deep!

Devin: Ah, he hot!

Dishawn: See, I like this.

Shaquel: Yo, look at this. He peepin’.

Dishawn: We don’t say peep!

Shaquel: (Reading a rap from the text. Everyone is quiet at this point)

Devin: Ooh wee, nice!

Shaquel: (still reading rap from text)

All: We rob ‘em…. (reading along in the text with Shaquel)

Darius: Reading another rap in the text.

Devin, What page that on?

Darius: Stab him in the hand again so you can wake up and know. It’s not a game. You’re not gangster. I’ll pop your chain.

Devin: (chuckling) Let me see that.
Shaquel: Check him out (referring to character in the text).

Dishawn: (continuing) …but show me where you really from.

Darius: Oh, that’s deep.

Devin: Ah, ah, this is deep. Baby gangster on “my granny.” I don’t be saying any of that though. I use some of this “My granny.” That’s the crispiest rap right here. This book crispy!

Darius: (reading) “I bear the cross of the forgotten soldier. The ghetto messiah offered up for our sins for the people. Down in the streets to rule beasts. A long walk in time hell fire.” He said, “Kons can the end be ‘cuz you’re not around…He told me lasting all time consequence. I wish I didn’t have to write this rhyme.”

All: (all listening)

Researcher: Forgive me but what does “My Granny” mean?

Devin: Oh My Granny?

Researcher: Yeah.

Shaquel: Like oh my grandmother.

Devin: Swearing rather than cussing.

Researcher: Okay.

Devin: I swear to god. It’s kinda like that.

Researcher: Okay now I get it.

(Blokedz, Session twelve, August 5, 2014)

The participant read the text and focused on the raps. The raps inspired personal connections as evidenced by the frequency of expressions of “This book is crispy” and
“My granny.” These interactions supported Jacobs (2007) who maintained that moving from the understandings of text conventions, students can also be asked questions about finer details of what they have read when using both text and pictures. The discussion below helped to illustrate this idea.

Researcher: That’s great. In the Book Club we have been reading and discussing graphic novels. You want to learn about the Illuminati. Based upon your experiences with books with just text and graphic novels, which format do you think is better to learn from?

Dishawn: The graphic novel.

Devin: Yeah man.

Researcher: Why is that?

Darius: Because we understand more. How it happened and why it happened and when did it happen.

Researcher: By looking back at the pictures?

Darius: Yeah.

(Last Book Club Session: Discussion Wrap Up, twenty-four, November 4, 2014)

Discussions by the participants moved from linear reading of the text to skimming and scanning for information that caught their attention. Frequently they referred each other to specific pages in the book. Although some of the text was read to support arguments more often the illustrations served that purpose. Text was used as a reference less as opposed to illustrations being used. To distinguish one character from another or one idea from another, participants would refer to facial expressions, the color of the characters’ clothing, or anatomy as opposed to citing the text where the character was
clearly identified either by himself or another character. This occurred in *Yummy*, in *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun*, in *Blokhedz*, in *Static Shock*, and *V for Vendetta* as evidenced in their discussions.

Irrespective of the skimming or looking at the illustrations, the participants were engaged with these graphic novels by enhancing the text’s details with illustration often by inferring what the author and artists intended (Ivey, 2008). The illustrations along with text seemed to help the participants in a manner that they may not have been able to comprehend in text-only literature.

Observing the interactions between members of the Book Club showed differences in the use of comprehension skills. Devin’s comprehension reading scores tested lower than other participants. He appeared to, rely more on using the illustrations to make meaning and support his point or position. This was shown in the following discussion that occurred during Book Club session twelve while discussing the graphic novel *Blokhedz*.

**Researcher:** Okay, gentleman, while you are looking at that one of the things we are going to be taking a look at again as book critics is... We are going to be looking at some imagery and symbolism, denotation and connotation and we’ll talk about what that means. When we read the text. We are also coning to consider connotation and denotation. Okay, We are going to read chapter 1.

**Devin:** I want to call my mom, man.

**Researcher:** You want to call your mom?

**Devin:** Yeah (moaning)
Group: rustling papers and books

Devin: (looking at the cover of the book) This is Chicago, ain’t it?

Researcher: No this is a fictitious city like Chicago. There may be some things that remind you of Chicago.

Devin: I thought this was Chicago. I never heard of these things in Chicago. I heard about things in Toledo but not Chicago. (Reference Black Disciples)

Shaquel: This is New York, man.

Devin: This is New York? Wow!

Darius, who tested higher, appeared to rely more on the text to achieve the same results but also used illustrations as additional proof to legitimize his comments. This was shown in the following discussion.

Researcher: Okay, I can see that you are all getting into that now but the denotation and connotation page right here (extricating myself since as a group they don’t want to go where I’m trying to lead)

Darius: So he was about that life it look like. The stuff he wrote about was about that life.

(Blokhedz, Session twelve, August 5, 2014)

During this exchange other participants were flipping through the book and reading the rap lyrics out loud to each other. In the field notes it was noted that while this this was happening Darius looked focused as if trying to find an answer. Darius began to read out loud to himself from the text that were not rap lyrics. He made the following observation. He said, “Cause and effect? Blocko represent respect!”
It appeared that from the participants’ comments that both their comprehension and attitude were enhanced at least to a level reflected by their skimming of the book prior to reading it fully and sharing the books and Book Club experiences with other detainees and center staff.

How did recidivistic adolescent males discuss graphic novels in Book Club? The evolution of the Book Club sessions showed an increase in the frequency of individual and group interactions with specific books as reflected in the spontaneous outbursts when dealing with certain books. This raised some questions. Did this constitute increased reading engagement or just general engagement with the text? Were illustrations by themselves sufficient to aid true comprehension of text?

**Conclusion**

The participants in this study demonstrated an eagerness to discuss graphic novels that captured their interest. This interest was displayed through their excited utterances such as Devin saying, “This book is crispy!” as he was discussing *Blokhedz* and Serron saying, “This is a really good book man. You can really relate because this stuff really happens in the world.” They discussed the illustrations and text as it related to their life and world view. This was evidenced by Devin’s drawing and how he connected with the graphic novel *Blokhedz* (see Figure 9). Another example was this discussion.

**Serron:** This right here when he took the bullets out of the little kid’s heart, he said, he told the little dude his brother, “Make sure Giant gets these.” “For what? To remind him every choice you make has a Konzaquence.”

**Shaquel:** Ah, his brother’s name.
Dishawn: This book’s scaring me I swear to god. This book’s scaring me though.

Darius: He (Kons) told his little brother to live for him. Write words.

Shaquel: (reading) “A coward dies a thousand a soldier but one.” His brother went out like a soldier.

Researcher: His brother was a soldier?

Dishawn: This book scary, man. It’s real, it’s too real.

(Book Club session sixteen, September 2, 2014)

The participants also demonstrated their power as consumers of literature by expressing what they liked about the various characteristics of the book’s illustrations and paper. They also expressed what they felt would be the type of graphic novels people would like to read. This was demonstrated by participant rejection of some graphic novels because they perceived the paper quality too closely resembled that of a regular comic book. They preferred the glossy heavier weight paper. The illustrations were also important. Color illustrations as expressed by Devin that mimicked “full on movie” were the most preferred. The participants indicated that people would prefer to read graphic novels that they could relate to and teach them something different. Devin expressed it this way, “Yeah, you got to make it pertain to people’s lives.”

These participants demonstrated the power of group dynamic. Instead of being driven by a teacher, the group came to define the researcher’s role. They ultimately became a Book Club where the discussions and direction were the product of their
participation. Group authority and power were evident by as participants changed the direction and nature of the discussion. This was obvious in this discussion of *Blockhedz*.

Serron: This right here when he took the bullets out of the little kid’s heart, he said, he told the little dude his brother, “Make sure Giant gets these.” “For what?” “To remind him every choice you make has a Konzaquence.”

Shaquel: Ah, his brother’s name.

Dishawn: This book’s scaring me I swear to god. This book’s scaring me though.

Darius: He (Kons) told his little brother to live for him. Write words.

Shaquel: (reading) “A coward dies a thousand a soldier but one.” His brother went out like a soldier.

Researcher: His brother was a soldier?

Dishawn: This book scary, man. It’s real, it’s too real.

( *Yummy, Session sixteen September 2, 2014* )

This idea of power and group dynamic was shown earlier in Book Club session thirteen while discussing *Blockhedz*.

Researcher: Yeah, but you’re going to have to do some reading for me. I saw you skimming it but we are supposed to be reading chapter one.

Serron: Oh, we supposed to be reading

Researcher: (Responding to comment about length) It’s not that long

Serron: Hey, chapter two way right here
Researcher: It ain’t that big.
Serron: I want this book though.
Devin: I want the book now. I want to read it up stairs.
Serron: He keep saying he going to give us the books. He been saying that for two weeks He said it last week.
Researcher: Sure did.
Serron: And the last week before that.
Researcher: But you said you weren’t going to be here this week.
Serron: I know but now I’m here
Devin: I could stay out of trouble if I could just get this book
Researcher: You want to go upstairs?
Serron: Yeah. I want the book though if you keep saying you going to give it to us.

(Book Club session sixteen, September 2, 2014)

The way the Book Club participants discussed the graphic novels demonstrated connections to the graphic novels, likes and dislikes of certain graphic novels, and a desire to read more graphic novels.

Research Question 2

The second research question guiding this study was, “Was there increased reading comprehension of recidivist youth when reading graphic novels?” To answer this question, quantitative data was the primary source. Both pre- and post- scores for each participant for word recognition and comprehension were obtained using the QRI-5 (Leslie & Caldwell, 2011). However, the QRI-5 required at least 4 months before gains
might show and participants in this study did not spend this much time in Book Club, so such gains could not be realized. Longer studies of this type should be sought to look for gains in comprehension skills in participants. The quantitative results are included in Table 6, Figure 5, and Figure 6 below.

Table 6

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<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaquel</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deonte</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alonzo</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Upper Middle</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Pre and post test results for QRI-5 word recognition
Note. Independent: 9 –10 correct, Instructional: 7 – 8 correct, Frustration 0 – 6 correct

The QRI-5 is an informal reading assessment. Although not norm referenced, assessment inter-scorer reliability scores for oral reading was 99% and comprehension question was at 98% as discussed in Leslie and Caldwell, (2011). The QRI-5 provided literacy information in three areas. It provided information on participant reading level, specific areas of reading difficulty, and was used to document growth. For this study, the areas of comprehension and reading level were the focus.
The second research question was: “Was there increased reading comprehension of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?” This question was answered with quantitative data obtained by the results of the QRI-5. The QRI was used to identify subjects’ reading levels—独立, instructional, and frustration—and to provide valuable diagnostic information. The pretest was administered to determine the instructional reading defined in the QRI-5. There were no statistically significant gains made in either word identification or comprehension instructional levels of the participants on the quantitative measures.

The reading comprehension levels of the participants were varied as evidenced by their pre-test scores on the QRI-5 and showed no statistical difference with the post-test scores. Scores on the reading comprehension passage test identified the participant’s reading level which was described as Instructional wherein 67 – 85% of questions were answered correctly. The researcher had participants read QRI-5 passages to determine instructional reading levels before and after the six-month they were reading graphic novels in the Book Club.

**Participant Post Study Testing Characteristics**

The results for the posttest examination for each participant was similar to their pre-test results. Words that were missed in isolation were also missed in context when they read the passage. Recall of facts remained generally the same. The exceptions were Darius’s and Tyrone’s reading comprehension score went from frustration to instructional as show in Figure 6.

Although the quantitative data does not reflect group comprehension growth, the qualitative data points to periods where the participants constructed meaning as a group.
This was supported by evidence in this discussion that occurred during Book Club session where the group by looking at the illustrations and the actions depicted in them came to a conclusion about the validity of the character’s actions and their interpretative meaning.

Robert: They stretched him out.
Deonte: If he come back busting out I truly understand.
Dishawn: He about to do something.
Shaquel: He didn’t even want to fight. That’s a shame.
Dishawn: What page you on?
Robert: 38
Deonte: He act like he fight all the time. He wrestle. He didn’t even swing.
Dishawn: Soft!!

(Fist Stick Knife Gun, session 8 July 8, 2014)

The researcher asked Dishawn to explain what he meant by “soft.” He said, “He was scared.” Another example of this occurred during another Book Club discussion.

Researcher: Did he ever get that medallion back?
Shaquel: Yeah
Dishawn: He did?
Darius: Yeah, at the end of the book. He was in the sewer and his brother came with, uh, what I think was his ghost or whatever.
Shaquel: Spirit, his spirit.
Darius: And as soon as he got it, it just, the sewer just drained and he was back on the streets with the medallion. The dude got shot. It’s like his hand. He had power in his hand or something.

Shaquel: That little rap dude got shot. He’s got power. It’s in his hand or something. He took the bullets out of the little dude and brought him back to life. Like everything he was doing with his hand. He had the power in his hand. Like when he was getting caught by the police officer, he done broke the police. Beat the police officer up and he asked him how he do that. He told him he don’t know. It was something about his hand that and about that little lion thang. He had powers.

Researcher: So what was the lion?

Shaquel: I think it was a symbol of his strength.

*(Blokhedz, Session sixteen, September 2, 2014)*

**Research Question 3**

The third research question guiding this study was, “Was there improved reading attitude of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?” In discussing these findings results were discussed first as a group and then individually. In order to answer this question the primary data source was the pre- and post-scores on the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS).

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey is a grade 1 to 6 norm-referenced Likert-scale reading attitude survey that measures recreational and academic reading attitude. The instrument as described in McKenna and Kear, (1990) has a high degree of
reliability and therefore was used with this study’s participants. The assessment was administered individually during both the pre-test and post-test event.

Graphic novel illustrations have been shown to be invaluable for motivating reluctant readers (Schwarz, 2002). The researcher drew upon quantitative data for from pre- and post-test results on the ERAS. There were no statistically significant results for the group on the ERAS when comparing pre-test to post-test scores (see Table 6). However, there were significant gains made by individual participants’ specifically for recreational reading attitude scores as reflected in Figure 7.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recreational: Posttest</th>
<th>Recreational: Pretest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>19.09090909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>151.6</td>
<td>72.29090909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hypothesized Mean Difference</td>
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<tr>
<td>df</td>
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<td>t Stat</td>
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<td>P(T&lt;=t) one-tail</td>
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<tr>
<td>t Critical one-tail</td>
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<tr>
<td>P(T&lt;=t) two-tail</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical two-tail</td>
<td>2.228138852</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7

*Individual participant pretest and posttest scores*

![ERAS Recreational Reading chart](chart)

Table 7

*Individual ERAS recreational scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tyrone</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaquel</td>
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<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darius</td>
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<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serron</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dishawn</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deonte</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devin</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alonzo</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was no statistical significance for the group between the pre-test and post-test on the ERAS academic reading analysis as reflected in Figure 9. However, individual differences were seen. Again, according to McKenna and Kear (1990) when interpreting the individual results of the ERAS, they point out that a 5 point difference is required before any real change can be assumed. Dishawn’s academic reading score increased by 6 points and Alonzo’s academic reading score increased by 12 points. Conversely, Deonte’s academic reading score decreased by 5 points as reflected in Figure 8. The
results show that a significant change according to the ERAS was achieved by 3 of the 9 participants.

Figure 8.

**ERAS individual academic scores**

Summary of the Findings

The findings support using graphic novels with recidivist male adolescents in a Book Club. The qualitative data, regarding reading attitude indicated that the participants’ responses to graphic novels were favorable, and their interest in reading graphic novels appeared to increase throughout the study although it was also dependent upon the specific graphic novel. The findings suggest that the reading of graphic novels increased the participants’ reading engagement and had a positive effect on their reading attitude. Although the quantitative data was not as strong as the qualitative data in this study, there were individual increases in many of the participants’ reading attitude. However, as a group the results from the survey showed no statistical significance between the reading raw scores pretest and the posttest raw score. The two tailed t-test showed a t-value of 1.371425645 and a critical t-value of 2.228138852 showing $P > 0.05$.
Table 8

T-test: ERAS academic score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Raw Score: Posttest</th>
<th>Raw Score: Pretest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Variance</td>
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<td>Observations</td>
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<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
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<td>Hypothesized Mean Difference</td>
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<tr>
<td>t Stat</td>
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<td>t Critical one-tail</td>
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<td>P(T&lt;=t) two-tail</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t Critical two-tail</td>
<td>2.228138852</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative data substantiated the findings that the participants’ reading engagement and reading attitude increased as a result of the study. For example, the participants showed that their reading attitude toward graphic novels extended to their desire to share their books and Book Club experiences with other residents. This resulted in other residents subsequently joining the group and others making inquiries about the Book Club. Additionally, the participants suggested obtaining other graphic novels they wanted to read toward the conclusion of the study. Those reading behaviors transcended the participants’ Book Club engagement and reinforced the findings of increased reading attitude.

The descriptive information from the qualitative data offered more positive indications that the participants’ reading attitude improved during the study. Participant
oral and written comments and other artifacts about their experiences with graphic novels implied that this reading attitude change. For example, Devin drew a picture of the title *Blokhedz* saying that it was his favorite graphic novel. He went further adding his own artwork to the title and when the researcher asked about it he describe the relationship between *Blokhedz* and his life experience.

He defined it this way. He said, “I grew up in the bricks.” This illustrated his home environment in the hood. He said, “I’ve been shot.” He told the researcher that the shattered glass in the “O” of is drawing reflects that. He wanted to add more to the drawing but we did not have time left for him to complete it. During the time he was drawing he appeared totally involved with what he was doing and oblivious to the discussions and distractions around him.

Figure 9.

*Drawing by Devin to support his attachment to the graphic novel Yummy.*
Alonzo, was saddened when he viewed the character Yummy lying in a casket. He said, “The only part that made me cry was the dude in the casket. I saw my coach flashback. I read that book and I seen his face.” and commented that it reminded him of his coach who he had been close to.

If literacy competence such as comprehension can be attained through the enjoyment of reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004), it is reasonable to suggest that the participants in this study felt some competence when reading graphic novels. Although specific instances of participants’ competence displayed by reading the novel were infrequent because of limited access, anecdotal evidence of competence was evidenced by participant discussions on Yummy, Blokhedz, and V for Vendetta demonstrated by participant excited utterances, reading aloud the text in a fluent manner and participant exchanges during discussions. Additionally, participants’ QRI-5 comprehension scores show that two participants went from frustration level to instructional level, one participant went from instructional level to independent level, and one participant went from frustration level to independent level. These actions appear to reinforce the comprehension element of competence supporting Strommen and Mates (2004).
Chapter 5

Discussion

1. How did recidivistic youth discuss graphic novels in a Book Club?

2. Was there increased reading comprehension of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?

3. Was there improved reading attitude of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?

Daniel J. Boorstin (1984), argued in his document published in 1984 as Senate report 98 – 231, that our culture is based on books and that our democracy is built on text and reading. He cautioned that our tradition, based on books, is threatened by illiteracy and aliteracy. The commonly accepted definition of illiteracy is “an inability to read and write.” Aliteracy, a term coined by Boorstin, former librarian of the Library of Congress in 1984, in his document entitled *Books and Our Future*, is defined as “having the ability to read but being uninterested in doing so.” Although a quantifiable and measurable standard defining aliteracy is nebulous, the lack of “reading desire” is still fundamental to the breadth of the problem. The ability to decode and comprehend text, irrespective of competence is considered literate in this discussion.

Boorstin’s (1984) contention, however, that what we do with books and reading will have a crucial impact on our efficacy as citizens. Opportunities for insight, improvement, the ability to participate in the democratic process, and a capacity for intelligent self-government would certainly be diminished.

The descriptive information from the qualitative data of this study offered positive indications that the participants’ reading attitude was impacted. Participant’s comments
and other artifacts about their experiences with graphic novels implied that they became more engaged readers. For example, Devin drew a picture of the title *Blokhedz* saying that it was his favorite graphic novel. He went further adding his own artwork to the title and when asked about it described the relationship between *Blokhedz* and his life experience (See Figure 9). Alonzo, was saddened when he viewed the character Yummy lying in a casket and commented that it reminded him of his coach who he had been close to. Other comments reflected how much these young men connected these books were to their real life experiences.

Not every graphic novel that was read during this study was greeted equally by the participants. The participants embraced and discussed those graphic novels that appealed to them in some fashion. The evidence showed that the participants in this study found themes, language, and situations that they could relate to in the graphic novels were the most appealing. As consumers of literature these participants were also drawn to the physical characteristics of the graphic novel in the form of their perception of paper quality and illustration quality. These factors worked together to create an atmosphere where the participants appeared eager to discuss the graphic novels in a social setting. Therefore, if increases in reading attitude can be obtained through the enjoyment of reading then it is reasonable to conclude based on the facts that there was some enjoyment of reading the selected graphic novels.

**Implications for Theory**

**Reading Engagement and Attitude**

Reading engagement and reading attitude are sometimes viewed as synonymous terms. They are different. In this study attitude was a quantitative characteristic that was
observable and measurable using the ERAS. Reading engagement was a qualitative measure based upon observations of the participants using the graphic novels during the Book Club sessions. Often educators view reading within the framework of the reader, the text and the context. In this study the researcher took a group of readers with similar backgrounds that had varied reading abilities and reading interests. They were grouped together and given selected graphic novels to read. They read these graphic novels in the social context of a Book Club.

Grounded theory according to Glaser and Strauss (1967) was the discovery of a theory from data systematically obtained from social research. The quantitative and qualitative data from this research appear to point in a specific direction. The grounded theory proposed was that this direction can be viewed in the context of “fit,” “elements of flow,” and power.” In this grounded theory, based on the data, the fit of the text meaning, the aesthetics of the text, the language of the text, and the relatability and themes of the text influenced the characteristics to the reader that included flow. The context in which the reading event took place influenced the individual power of the reader that inspired confidence to accept, reject, or challenge conclusions or interpretations of a person perceived to be in a more powerful or authoritative than themselves. When these elements were in balance reading engagement and reading attitude had the potential to become an absorbing enjoyable experience known as “flow.”

**Flow.** Psychological flow is defined as a state of complete immersion in an activity. It is a state of "being completely involved in an activity for its own sake” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). He described this as your whole being as involved in the moment akin to a “runners high.” People experience flow in a variety of different
activities but in similar ways. Some people experience flow through sports. Others might experience flow while engaged in an activity such as, drawing, painting or writing. According to Csíkszentmihályi (1990) there are eight factors that accompany the experience of flow. Many of these elements may be present, but to experience flow it is not necessary that all of them to occur. Csikszentmihalyi, (1990) flow factors are listed below:

1. We confront tasks we have a chance of completing;
2. We must be able to concentrate on what we are doing;
3. The task has clear goals;
4. The task provides immediate feedback;
5. One acts with deep, but effortless involvement, that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life;
6. One exercises a sense of control over their actions;
7. Concern for the self disappears, yet, paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over; and
8. The sense of duration of time is altered.

Although there was only one data point supporting this idea of flow. The researcher did not feel the discussion should be discounted in connecting flow to the ideas of fit and power. Devin during a written reflective exercise while reading Blokhedz decided to draw instead of write. Devin would feign illness when asked to write and always chose to draw. During this period he met four of Csíkszentmihályi’s elements of flow. Devin was total engaged and seemingly oblivious to other participants or events around him. When I asked him to describe what he drew, he said it represented his life.
He said, “I grew up in the bricks. There were a whole bunch of bricks in my neighborhood. The bullet holes, I got shot. The wooden planks? I don’t know they just looked sweet.” (See Figure 9). To this end his actions appeared to reinforce factors of “flow.” For Devin, his connection with the graphic novel Blokhedz manifested itself in his wanting to create and reflect in a manner suggesting that he was in the “zone”.

In adapting Csíkszentmihályi’s ideas to schools and adolescent male literacy in particular, Wilhelm and Smith narrow the factors of flow to:

1. A sense of control and competence;
2. A challenge that requires an appropriate level of skill;
3. Clear goals and feedback; and
4. A focus on the immediate;

To this list, they have added:

5. The importance of the social;
6. The importance of getting away;
7. The importance of activity; and
8. The importance of avoiding the routine.

When one considers Smith and Wilhelm’s definition of flow, the graphic novel-based Book Club for these young men makes a good deal of sense. You may recall that a number of them chose to join this group to “avoid their routine” and because they wanted to “get away” and perhaps be social. They are adolescents after all, and one should not discount the importance of interacting with their peers. It is no coincidence that many of them came and left in pairs, after all. Perhaps one of the greatest appeals of all of these books, with the exception of the last one, besides the obvious connection to their own
lives and world was its “focus on the immediate” as it applied to something important in real time to them. Not only did *V for Vindetta* not do this, but it was simply too difficult and thus not a “challenge that requires an appropriate level of skill.” This is what makes video games so very popular as entertainment; they quickly match the opponent as neither too easy nor too difficult. We must do this for our readers as well. Which leads us to *fit*.

**Fit.** This study supported theories regarding reading attitude using this idea of “fit, power, and flow.” In this study the choice of the graphic novel and opportunity to discuss the graphic novel using a combination of text and illustrations impacted fit. For example, during a conversation with the participants, when they were discussing choice, the researcher asked, “You want to learn about the Illuminati. Based upon your experiences with books with text and graphic novels, which format do you think is better to learn from?”

Dishawan responded, “The graphic novel” and Devin agreed.

Commenting on the importance to illustrations to the learning process, Darius contributed by saying, “Because we understand more. How it happened and why it happened and when it happened.”

Another example of fit and power occurred during another conversation the researcher had with the participants during the same session. The young men were asked, “You have suggested graphic novel books you would like to read. If you were running a Book Club how would you select the books?”

Dishawn responded, “I would start off like you did and see what they liked about them.” Darius added, “Put stuff in there that is real that they could relate to.” These two
conversations reinforced Krashen’s (2004) point about individual choice in what they want to read and how they want to read. Krahen’s (2004) examination of case studies concluded that gains in literacy and language development could only be attributed to recreational reading and that there were no plausible confounds or alternative explanations for the development.

This re-enforced the findings of previous studies that showed when a person was motivated and given choices as to what to read, they tended to do more reading (Baker& Wigfield, 1999). This concept was reinforced by the participants’ actions when re-evaluating graphic novels they had previously read in the Book Club. In this study the participants preferred the graphic novel Blokhedz above the others, and yet they found merit in re-considering the other titles they previously had rejected after comparing and contrasting themes and ideas embedded in each text.

This was reflected during a Book Club session when writing and discussing previous books in which the character Yummy was called “hard” by Devin and the character of Geoffrey Canada the main character from Fish Stick Knife Gun was called “soft” by Dishawn when discussing the similarities and the differences of characters and what their situations required of them. After further inquiry Darius clarified that since Yummy, had no support network he grew up knowing only the hard life. Conversely, Geoffrey Canada was viewed as weak because he came from a family unit that supported him. So his delinquent activities were more about trying to survive rather than fit in. As Devin describing Yummy, during this session he said, “He was scared. You can’t be fried [high] and be a little boy. You got to be fried all the time, but he was just fried with just
friends. You got to be fried everywhere you go, and with people putting things in his head, he just did something wrong.”

The participants in this study demonstrated that they were motivated to engage with and discuss the graphic novels in the Book Club through text as well as the illustrations. For example, during a discussion of Yummy, Robert looking at the illustrations in the book, asked the group, “Why the officers got to be White?”

Shaquel responded, “Because they play you. Look at they face.” Although it was not articulated by Shaquel, the illustrations to which he was referring where White officers with a dismissive and condescending look on their face. His comment was reflective of the attitude of minorities seen in recent social unrest events in the media when dealing with White officers. It was that illustration based on prior knowledge that made that comprehensive connection. Another example of how the illustrations lead to discussion and comprehension was an exchange between Devin, Serron, and Darius when they were discussing Blokhedz. The exchange went like this. Devin commented on an illustration. He said, “Yeah, that boy be scraping.”

Serron, commented, “I thought those was gold teeth.”

This was followed by Darius saying, “Let me see the picture.”

The ways in which the participants engaged and discussed with the graphic novel demonstrated an enthusiasm for this literary medium as opposed to some reading opportunities they reported with classroom text. For example, when the participants were asked if they would prefer learning from a text only book or a graphic novel all of the participants indicated that they would prefer the graphic novel. Their rationale was that the pictures helped them to understand better. Reading theorists have also associated high
reading motivation with high efficacy and high reading attitude while low reading motivation was associated with low efficacy and low reading attitude. (Pitcher et al., 2007) Therefore this study built upon previous research in reading motivation based upon the demonstrated increases in reading attitude of the participants.

Results from the Book Club sessions and the results from the ERAS demonstrate that the participants enjoyed their reading experience with the graphic novels. The reading experience and reading enjoyment was in part attributable to the “fit” of the text language, themes, paper, and illustrations, as evidenced by the participant discussions and by participant enthusiasm for this literacy medium. This enthusiasm was expressed by Devin, while reading Blokhedz. He excitedly commented, “Dang! I got to have this book!” This outburst suggested that he liked the book, connected with it, and wanted to read it.

Since the participants in this study embraced the graphic novel format, I needed further evidence as to the extent of their attraction to the format. When asked what type of books they would like to read as graphic novels, Devin responded, Monster!” It just so happened that Monster written by Dean Myers was being adapted into a graphic novel. Darius said, he wanted to read books about conspiracy theories. Graphic novels for this study’s population were a desired reading format.

**Social Interaction.** How do recidivistic adolescents interpret literature containing "authentic" depictions of their recidivistic group? Book Clubs are social, collaborative activities dependent upon interaction.

The Book Club offered a specific social interaction opportunity. Outside of the Book Club there was evidence that suggested the social interactions continued and that
these interactions showed that the participants continued to engage with the books. This continued engagement was shown in actions and inquiries made by other residents and staff. The researcher was approached by several staff members in the center who had witnessed the participants sharing the Book Club books with non-Book Club members on their unit and saying how “cool” the books were. The staff members indicated to the researcher that non-Book Club residents on the unit expressed excitement about the books especially *Yummy* and *Blokhedz*. These staff members who witnessed these interactions also expressed to the researcher a desire to read the Book Club books themselves. The impact that these “outside of the Book Club” social interactions with the books had and what they meant to engagement was shown by the desire of others to become members of the Book Club.

Devin, Darius, Dishawn, Serron, and Shaquel, joined the Book Club after they had conversations with Malcolm, Robert, and Tyrone. Alonzo joined later after hearing about *Yummy*. Prior to Book Club session fifteen, two residents approached the researcher in the lobby of the center and expressed an interest to join the Book Club based upon what they had heard. Unfortunately, it was too late in the study to have them join and the researcher told them this.

The participants were the most interactive when they all embraced a specific graphic novel. During this study the graphic novel *Blokhedz* created the most interactions evidenced as by the level of participant discussions as reflected in Table 5. These participants interacted with the text and illustrations. Peer group settings are often referred to as learning communities within the study of education. In this study, this type of peer group was referred to as a Book Club. Under each definition, participants are
brought together in a social setting to learn. Most of the learning in these groups occur
due to interaction with others.

The Book Club in this study acted as a catalyst for the participants to wrestle with,
internalize, argue, reject, and accept the text and illustrations of the graphic novel to
reach a conclusion. This experience allowed the participants to reach similar and different
interpretations of the same information based upon their funds of knowledge and prior
knowledge irrespective of their reading ability. Before they could reach this point,
however, the dynamics of their social interactions and their perceptions about Book Club
and how it functioned had to be established. The researcher described this as an evolution
from school classroom dependence to Book Club independence. The traditional
classroom had the teacher as the leader. This position was generally accepted and not
challenged. This school dependence had a set of rules and procedures to be followed with
clearly defined roles. The relationship between teacher and student was viewed as the
leader and lead, the boss and the employee or any other relationship that describes this
power dynamic. It was a relationship that was akin to dependence. A relationship that
suggested, “I’m in charge; do as I say.”

Conversely, the Book Club was the antithesis to school classroom dependence in
that all participants had an equal voice, and it was through this level of equality that
power emerged. The power of these interactions was evidenced in the number of
participants that subsequently expressed interest in the Book Club or joined the Book
Club. Their desire to do so was attributable to interactions with Book Club members
outside of the Book Club sessions.
The importance of text. The text in the graphic novel was an important element that affected fit and flow. Reading was an event that involved the reader and the text. Instead of two separate entities acting on one another, the reader and the text were two aspects of a process. Meaning did not reside ready-made “in” the text or “in” the reader but happened or came into being during the transaction between reader and text (Roenblatt, 2004). Although the beauty of reading was multiple interpretations there still remained the relationship between the reader and the writer. Therefore, the closer the reconstruction in the mind of the reader of the writer’s intent the closer the communication. The participants in this study demonstrated this idea of text fit by being able to connect themselves with the words.

Words are a label for a concept and we bring to the interpretation of those words our prior knowledge, our funds of knowledge. That knowledge through text interpretation evokes feelings and constructs. It is those interpretations that are organized and synthesized into what constitutes “meaning”. The participants in this study demonstrated this importance of text fit and interpretation by their discussions of the graphic novel Blokhedz. The participants were so involved with the words in Blokhedz that they could not break away from wanting to read the lyrics or comparing their vocabulary to the glossary terms. Blokhedz represented a good text fit.

Conversely, the participants had a difficult time discussing and reading V for Vendetta. As was shown in chapter 4 the language and concepts of the graphic novel V for Vendetta did not appeal to the participants. The language in V for Vendetta was more sophisticated and adult and did not represent participant understanding. The participants’ reaction to that particular graphic novel supported the idea of words as a label for a
concept. They did not possess the necessary background to make interpretations from the words to synthesized and construct meaning. For this group, the text of *V for Vendetta* represented a poor text fit.

Data from this study supported the position that meaning was derived from what the reader brought to the event. According to Salmon (1995), “Learning is not guaranteed by exposure to curriculum; what is learned must be assimilated with what is already known, particularly with the learner’s sense of personal identity.”

Accordingly data from this study supported this concept. Throughout the Book Club discussion, language was key to engagement and discussion if the language used was captivating a familiar concept, character or event from daily life of the participants. This was expressed by Dashawn as he read text out loud to the group then made a personal comment. The text he read was, “They don’t care about you. They care if you got a spine because they got guns to tear it out of you.” He went on to say, “Yes, Yes, my grand that’s deep!” Other participants made similar comments to selected text.

**The Importance of Aesthetic in Illustrations.** In reading, the readers adopted a readiness to focus attention on what was being experienced during the reading event. Aesthetics is commonly defined as perception through the senses, feelings, and intuitions. There is substantial evidence that pictures, graphics and/or visual images do play a critical role in learning (Hiebert, 2009). Visual imagery has an important role to play in education. Images can convey complex concepts in a succinct manner.

According to Bodmer (1992), illustrations serve to "expand, explain, interpret, or decorate a written text" (p. 72). Whether intended or not, illustrations sometimes tell a slightly different or even contradictory story than the text. It seems that the greater
proportion of illustration to text such as that in graphic novels, the greater the influence illustrations have in the creation of story (Lukens, 1990). Data from this study reinforced this concept. The participant’s referred to the illustrations often to make a point or to clarify a position. What was more telling about the power of these illustrations was the perceived quality of the illustrations. For example, Robert responding to *Yummy*, said, “It needs more color.” When the researcher asked why, he said so that he could differentiate between the various gang member affiliations.

Devin commenting on the illustrations of *Blokhedz*, called it a “full on movie.”

The aesthetics of the illustrations were not totally dependent upon just color images. This was seen in the engagement of the participants with the next book, *Fist Stick Knife Gun*. The book had color illustrations, but the paper of the graphic novel was of matted comic book grade whereas the previous book had glossy paper. All of the participants indicated that the combination of paper quality combined with stunning color illustrations increased their engagement with the text.

Tuckman (1965) identified, that before any group like this study’s graphic novel Book Club be created and become functional, a clear leadership needs to be established for the initiation and continuation of a process. The roles of a leader requires facilitation and management of the group’s activities (Jones, 2004; Polin, 2008; Wenger, 2000). Therefore, it was the role of the researcher at the outset of the study to initiate, develop, manage, and monitor the group’s activities with the purpose of aligning them with overall group goals. However, over time the position of the researcher as the leader changed when other members assumed the leadership role. Leadership, therefore, was an integral
part of ensuring the implementation of decision outcomes and community goals (Tuckman, 1965).

Schwarz (2002) cited one characteristic of an effective leader as the ability to facilitate collaboration and teamwork. The leader promoted participation leading to goal achievement. The qualitative results from this study supported this idea by demonstrating an evolution of participant behavior from school dependent to Book Club independent behavior. For example at the beginning sessions of the Book Club the researcher informed the participants that this was not a class but instead was a conversation. Yet, Robert asked if they could read out loud in a round robin manner and continually raised his hand looking for direction. This resulted in the researcher being perceived as the leader. Gradually that perception was removed and replaced by other Book Club members resulting in the researcher speaking less. More important was the frequency of the researcher’s talking as opposed to the participants. It was not until Book Club session 16 on September 9, 2014 that the participants dominated the conversation related to the book as opposed to the researcher dominating the discussion as reflected in Figure 10.

Figure 10.

*Frequency of words spoken by participant and researcher over time*
As evidenced by the Book Club frequency of talk, it took the participants 15 sessions of 24 before the as students dominated the Book Club conversation. Thus, the habits of school were very difficult for these learners to shed. Collaborative or shared leadership was especially critical when discussing complex ideas.

However, the perception by participants as to who was in charge was also important. How the participants arranged themselves contributed to this power struggle. Shaquel and the researcher sat on one side of the table and Alonzo and Darius sat on the opposite side. Devin, Dishawn, and Darius sat next to each other at one end of the table during Book Club sessions 8-24 (see Figure 4). According to Tuckman, (1965) as group members attempt to organize for a task, conflict inevitably results in their personal relations. Participants therefore must conform to suit the group. These conflicts represent struggles over leadership, power, and authority.

There was evidence supporting this idea of power and authority. For example, there was the relationship between Darius and Devin. Darius and Devin often competed for control of Book Club direction as evidenced in the following verbal exchange.

Darius: Okay, the first thing we’re going to do is go to the glossary. Go to the glossary you all. You all ain’t following directions. He gave me permission to step you all. What are you all doing?

Dishawn: What are you doing?

Researcher: He is trying to get you guys started.

Deonte: Can’t even get the book you all.

Researcher: You’ve got the book they’re just messing with you.

Deonte: Alright.
Darius; Everyone go to the glossary.

Devin; The glossary? Who is you, the director?

Darius: You all ain’t got to read it out loud, just read.

(Blokhedz, Session 15, August 26, 2014)

Devin ignored the direction. He skimmed the text and commented on sections that caught his interest thereby distracting other participants from Darius’ request to the group. Devin continued to try and wrestle control of the discussion away from Darius. For instance, while commenting on an illustration depicting the dice game “Celoé,” Devin said, “Oh, You remember that Serron?”

Serron now distracted by Devin responded, “I don’t know how to play that. I play regular dice.” Ultimately, the researcher asked Darius why the glossary.

He responded, “It’s just like what we see in the book. I just want them to understand that and get where they’re coming from. All of us probably already know everything, but it’s just how they look at it.”

The Book Club finally made it to the glossary, but it wasn’t until Devin decided to go there. This movement to the glossary was successful primarily because of participant perception of Devin’s power to control the outcome of the discussion. This was evidence of the power shift from school classroom dependence to Book Club independence. The power of decision was theirs. The participants decided what was important or not important to discuss. Darius and Devin both demonstrated power. Darius had demonstrated this power by ultimately getting the group to conform to his initial directions. Devin demonstrated power by his challenge to Darius’s authority and having other Book Club participants follow his lead. Most importantly the group had moved the
researcher to the sidelines and no longer looked to the researcher for guidance. The researcher’s power within the Book Club was now diminished.

Another example of power was when Darius dismissed the perception of the researcher’s power during one session by explaining to the researcher the expression “spit.” The expression was a concept the researcher was unfamiliar with. The researcher pretended to know what it meant but he did not. The researcher was the teacher faking an answer assuming the students would accept his answer without question. Darius saw through the charade, explained the term and then respectfully chuckled at the researcher’s ignorance. He confirmed his power when he told the researcher that he should have asked him if the researcher didn’t know.

Grounded theory suggested a framework of text fit and reader power and the potential impact it had on flow. The participants in this study showed that they embraced graphic novels that they felt were a good fit. Graphic novel fit included the physical characteristics of the book as well as the language and themes. The fit of the graphic novel was like the story of the Three Bears and Goldilocks. Like Goldilocks the participants perceived Static Shock as too soft or in other words not a good fit for them to become inspired to discuss the book. They cited their dislike of the paper and illustration quality for their position. On the other hand V for Vendetta was also not a good fit. It was too hard. Again the illustrations and paper quality were an issue, but the researcher observed the language and the story as too sophisticated for them to connect with the book. Blokhedz was just right. The story, the language, the paper quality and illustration quality of Blokhedz combined to create for the participants a good fit. Like Goldilocks, it
was just right. They had chosen their tool, so now what? What is the next piece of the puzzle? It was the idea of power.

**Power**

For the participants the power to choose, the power for self-determination, and the power of self-confidence that the Book Club experience offered created literacy opportunities. The Book Club, a social setting, offered the participants the opportunity to discover their individual power which was often absent in traditional education classrooms. Once the participants discovered their own power in terms of decision making and outcomes of the Book Club, their discussions became more reflective and exciting. The researcher’s role went from being the perceived teacher to a facilitator to a fellow discussant. So what about flow and how did this fit?

The prerequisite for the participants getting involved in the discussion of a specific graphic novel was power of choice without interference from the researcher. This power of choice allowed them to select the right graphic novel that provided the right fit for them in terms of language, themes, and visuals that connected to them and their world view. This graphic novel was *Blokedz* as evidenced by the amount of discussion generated during the Book Club sessions. They embraced this power.

Through the power of choice and by using their funds knowledge, they embraced their power. Power of choice helped the participants to educate each other, and at the same time educated the researcher who was no longer the person in charge. It was no longer up to the researcher to determine what was good or bad about a book. It was no longer up to a teacher to select what they should read or how they should read it. It was
no longer up to someone else to dictate the outcome of the Book Club. They placed the teacher in the proverbial corner to speak only when spoken to.

If the goal in literacy education is to get readers to read critically and reflect, then it is important to get in their hands the right tools. There has to be a good fit and they must have the power of choice, interpretation, and how it is read. If those two pieces of the puzzle align then flow will happen and the reader will be like Goldilocks falling asleep in the bed that is just right.

**Implications for Practice**

There is a significant amount of research conducted on the literacy of adolescent males and some focusing on African American young men. However, regarding juvenile detention educational practices, a need exists to implement more research-based literacy pedagogy that will have an impact on the literacy lives of incarcerated recidivistic male adolescents. The findings from this study have implications for influencing reading engagement of this population by using more engaging literacy resources, such as graphic novels and effective educational practices beyond rote learning.

Because of policy, funding, and standards, many educators are hesitant to use non-traditional texts and are unaware of the possible benefits that this population of students could derive from reading them. Although most educators are well-versed on how to teach students to comprehend text using conventional strategies, they are less familiar with the impact visuals have on literacy.

For teachers, using the graphic novel in a classroom Book Club was an important endaevor, not only to captivate the interest of at-risk readers but also because the graphic novel provided a platform to generate discussions and to work through complex
themes and concepts via text and illustrations. As this study demonstrated, the language of the graphic novel needed to be understandable and relatable to captivate the reading interest of the participants. The study also demonstrated the power that illustrations had on the reading attitude of the participants. The participants in this study demonstrated that they were art critics through their preference regarding illustrations. The participants embraced the high-end color illustrations and disliked the black and white illustrations. This study showed that by using graphic novels with captivating color illustrations, the reader’s attitudes were more positive. This increase in reading attitude and the link to the illustrations and text allowed the participants in the study to continually engage with the book and make meaning of the text that may have been lost if they were reading just text alone. The participants showed that they could justify their interpretations of the story to other members when they pointed out illustrations along with text that confirmed it. The power of the graphic novel to assist students in exploring both familiar and new ideas and concepts and explained how these ideas and concepts actually connect to their own lives through discussion.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) scores would suggest a statistical significance may be seen with a larger population study.

Despite the fact that literacy theorists support the use of graphic novels with adolescent readers, there is a need for additional scientific-based research to support their use with male adolescent readers. As Flynt & Brozo (2010) write, “We must design instruction that reflects the mediasphere in which children and youth live” (2010, p. 528). Information obtained from this study may assist juvenile detention literacy instruction by helping administrators and educators adopt and develop graphic novel activities that will
support incarcerated recidivistic male adolescents in their literacy journey. If adopted, changes will also need to be made in the way correctional educators are taught to use graphic novels in conjunction with traditional materials. If, as this study indicates, graphic novels are a promising format for supporting male adolescent literacy learning, changes in juvenile correctional curricula and the way teachers implement literacy instruction are warranted. This study is a step in addressing the use of graphic novels and the ways in which incarcerated recidivistic adolescent males engage with them.

**Motivation to Read**

Motivation to read can be defined as the likelihood of engaging in reading or choosing to read (Gambrell 2011). As was discussed regarding Book Club social interactions, the act of sharing the graphic novels with non-Book Club members and speaking highly of Book Club experience reinforced the idea that there was motivation to read by Book Club members and non-Book Club members. This was shown by the increased desire to obtain the books by Book Club members and non-members alike. This motivation showed an increase in reading engagement and most likely reading attitude.

The quantitative findings from the QRI-5 regarding the participants’ reading comprehension did not show a significant change in any of the participants’ pre and post-tests. However qualitative participant artifacts during Book Club sessions showed that the illustrations aided comprehension when participants were asked to re-tell events of the story. The results from this study concerning illustrations supports previous studies citing advantages of using graphic novels and comic books in the classroom to assist readers in making meaning. This is likely due to the illustrations providing visual scaffolding and contextual clues to the meaning of the written narrative (Hassett & Schieble, 2007). This
seems especially helpful for struggling and visual learners (Gavigan, 2010; Yang, 2008).


**Implications for Policy**

1.2 million children drop out of high school each year. Many of them are headed down the prison pipeline, but we continue to allow serving low income students of color, the same chronically underperforming instruction year after year without much progress.” (Duncan, 2010). United States education policy dictates that educators teach incarcerated recidivistic male adolescent effectively.

A challenge in detention educational services indicate that education may not be a priority (Foley, & Goa, 2002). A perceived consensus of opinion is a need for “get tough” approach to juvenile offenders (Krisberg & Austin, 1993; Redding 1999). Mobility of incarcerated youth is frequently a challenge to correctional education. Youth who move between facilities face changes is curriculum, instructional technique and expectations. This is disruptive to the continuity of their education. Therefore, transferable strategies are required. Graphic novel Book Clubs may be such an activity.

To accomplish this goal, correctional educational administrators require empirical research that addresses literacy skills of incarcerated recidivistic adolescents. Often missing from this discussion is the concept of reading engagement and interest that can help propel reading skill level opportunities by using nontraditional materials, such as graphic novels, for instructional and recreational reading. Although national and state education testing standards are designed to be measurable outcomes, using graphic novels can be adapted for both observable and measurable standards if current policy allowed for more flexibility in the curriculum.
Research opportunities outside the traditional classroom may be limited, given the pressure of high-stakes testing and a lack of uniformity. However, this study has promising implications for offering a broader view of incarcerated recidivistic male adolescent reading behaviors than the current literacy research provides.

**Implications for Further Research**

This study advances research on using graphic novels to engage recidivistic male youth by examining their use within a graphic novel Book Club. This study has laid a foundation for future studies into ways in which graphic novels affect the reading engagement, reading attitude, and reading comprehension of incarcerated recidivistic male youth. The findings from this study fill a gap in the research literature because no research has examined the use of graphic novels with incarcerated recidivistic male youth in a Book Club. This study found that when the participants read and discussed graphic novels in a Book Club setting, there was an increase in the ways they engaged with the text. However, the Qualitative Reading Inventory - 5 scores yielded little, if any gains. A next step in this line of research is to examine the comprehension transferability from reading graphic novels to text only materials while examining the relationships between reading engagement and reading attitude since reading motivation is often linked to academic achievement (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie, 2008).

The outcomes for incarcerated recidivistic male youth in this study may not be typical for all students. Studies conducted with larger populations would enhance the research by assessing whether or not the findings from this study are generalizable. Additionally, similar studies should be conducted in similar detention facilities in other municipalities. Specifically, the settings for future research should be in detection...
facilities with varying ethnic populations in order to determine whether or not graphic novels are an effective literacy tool for diverse populations. It would also be beneficial to examine the ways in which incarcerated recidivistic male youth respond to graphic novels, in order to determine whether or not the findings are age or grade-level specific.

Similar studies could be conducted with recidivistic females in detention facilities to determine if graphic novels affect their reading attitude and reading comprehension. Ultimately, developing longitudinal studies to examine continued use of graphic novels with recidivistic male youth outside of the detention facility would be helpful in obtaining additional data. A study conducted over a year would likely produce denser results than a study administered for only six months. It is feasible that the participants’ QRI-5 scores would have increased, if more time had been allowed for the students to continue their experiences in the graphic novel Book Club in order to develop into a more cohesive and reflective group.

This study shed new light on the use of graphic novels in juvenile detention facility extracurricular settings, specifically, graphic novel Book Clubs. Future graphic novel research in juvenile detention facilities should include studies that examine outside Book Club observations. Observing students using graphic novels in voluntary situations offers the opportunity for alternative perspectives on graphic novel reading engagement.

Future research should also examine the ways in which graphic novels can serve as a literary bridge to possible recidivism reduction by asking questions about the connections to text and self. These are questions that need to be considered. “Can graphic novels in a juvenile detention facility inspire reading engagement?” and, “How can we influence continued positive reading attitudes to include other materials, after they
experience success reading graphic novels?” For example, when discussing current events, a study might examine the ways in which incarcerated youth respond to a graphic novel titles that address issues of anarchy, fascism, and prejudice that appear to be pervasive issues in today’s society.

**Conclusion**

How do incarcerated recidivistic male youth interpret literature containing authentic depictions of their group? This research found that incarcerated recidivistic male youth had increased reading engagement as evidenced through their discussion and attitude when reading selected graphic novel titles in a graphic novel Book Club. The findings from this study support and reinforce previous studies using graphic novels with male adolescent readers. During the course of the study, reading graphic novels improved the participants’ reading engagement and had a positive effect on reading attitude of some individuals. The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrated that all nearly eleven participants showed some increase (though not significant) in their attitude (as measured by ERAS) by their participation in the graphic novel Book Club. This study also showed that the use of graphic novels through the combination of text and illustrations helped to generate discussions about the content. Reading the graphic novels increased participant reading attitude scores.

Arguments for the development of competent adolescent readers must be informed by studies of reading motivation and engagement (Moje et al., 2008). The findings from this study reinforce the idea that graphic novels are a viable format for not only engaging adolescent readers but also engaging adolescent incarcerated recidivistic youth. The motivational consequences of reading attitudes are that students with more
positive attitudes are perhaps more motivated to read. Although more reading does not necessarily equate to better reading, more reading does mean that there are more opportunities for literacy success. Attitude influences interest which influences “fit” that influences text comprehension and other important reading outcomes.

The results of this study suggest that each participant engaged with text and that reading attitude increased to the point of transcending the Book Club to wanting to seek out other graphic novel titles. However, the ways in which the participants engaged the text was heavily influenced by how he connected to the text “fit” and how he saw himself as a reader drawing upon his “power.” Participants who were more connected to the text via their prior knowledge, funds of knowledge, and the belief that he could comprehend the text were more willing to engage with it than they did if he believed it was too difficult shown by the amount of discussion with Blokhedz as opposed to V for Vendetta. However, even when a participant chose not to read a portion of text, he considered the illustrations as another way to comprehend the content. This study built upon previous research that examined whether or not graphic novels could effectively motivate recidivistic adolescent male readers to become consumers of literature.

So why was this study important? Why waste time reading what is essentially a comic book irrespective of their current popularity? Here is the reason. There, next to the sad, palsied old African American woman against the wall he stands. Erect, fists clinched against the world. Angry and disconnected from those around him, he is alone and defiant. Listening to him talk I know that his is not going to have a bright and successful future. As I see it, he needs to be able to read and comprehend. He needs to decipher the code of literacy and the love of reading. He is a juvenile delinquent in a juvenile
detention center. So what. Who cares? He did the crime. Let him pay. Throw away the key. He and those like him are blight on society and need to be removed from it. To prevent the scenario above from happening new approaches to literacy acquisition must be explored. Today print literacy is under constant competition from other forms of media that somehow robe people from making own interpretations of fact. They essentially become parrots repeating the party line. They are denied “fit.” They relinquish their “power.” They never have the opportunity to develop “flow” that comes from deep thought. Talking about and reading specific graphic novels may be the vehicle for certain readers that provides them the chance and the hope for a brighter future so that they do not end up on the heap of discarded humanity. As Salmon pointed out, learning is not guaranteed by exposure to curriculum (1995). Learning must be assimilated with what is already known. What is already known is the learner’s sense of personal identity. The graphic novels in this study attached to the participants’ personal identity thereby supporting Salmon’s (1995) statement.

In conclusion and in support of this study’s theory of fit, flow and power it suggested how the readers made meaning from illustrations and text. Oone is reminded of Socrates. “If am right, certain professors of education must be wrong when they say that they can put a knowledge into the soul which was not there before, like sight to blind eyes. (Socrates, Plato’s Allegory of the Cave). This is the idea that makes this study and studies like this important.
References


Appendices

Appendix A
Elementary Reading Attitude Survey

School ______________________  Grade ______  Name ____________________________

Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

1. How do you feel when you read a book on a rainy Saturday?
   - Picture options (not shown)

2. How do you feel when you read a book in school during free time?
   - Picture options (not shown)

3. How do you feel about reading for fun at home?
   - Picture options (not shown)

4. How do you feel about getting a book for a present?
   - Picture options (not shown)

Page 1

© PAWS – www.professorgarfield.org
Survey designed by Dennis J. Kear, Wichita State University
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

5. How do you feel about spending free time reading a book?

6. How do you feel about starting a new book?

7. How do you feel about reading during summer vacation?

8. How do you feel about reading instead of playing?
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

9. How do you feel about going to a bookstore?

10. How do you feel about reading different kinds of books?

11. How do you feel when a teacher asks you questions about what you read?

12. How do you feel about reading workbook pages and worksheets?
Please circle the picture that describes how you feel when you read a book.

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<th>How do you feel when you read out loud in class?</th>
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<th>How do you feel about using a dictionary?</th>
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<th>How do you feel about taking a reading test?</th>
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Appendix B
Institutional Review Board Human Subject Research Form

YOUTH RESEARCH SUBJECT ASSENT FORM

A Study to Access the Influence of the Illustrated Novel on Reading Engagement of Incarcerated Youth

Principal Investigator:

• You are being invited to be in a study to help understand people better.
• You should ask any questions you have before making up your mind about being in the study. You can think about it and discuss it with your family or friends before you decide. Because your time here is limited you must make up your mind in the next two days.
• It is okay to say “No” if you don’t want to be in the study. If you say “Yes” you can change your mind and then quit the study at any time without getting in trouble.

Incarcerated means locked up. We are doing a research study to see if reading illustrated books helps people enjoy reading books more. A research study is a way to learn more about people. If you want to be part of this study, this is what will happen in the following order:

1. You will be encouraged to answer some simple questions about your reading history. A reading history are questions that ask you about your feelings about reading and how you have used books since you learned to read.

2. You will also be encouraged to tell the researcher about the kind of books you like to read.

3. You will also be encouraged to take a reading test. When you take the reading test it will be just you and the tester in the room. During the test you will be encouraged to read a few short pages of a story and then will be encouraged to answer some questions from memory about what you read. This test is not graded and no one other than the tester will know how you did, just do your best.

4. During the research study you will read a graphic novel that is like a long comic book. You will then participate in small group discussions with other study participants to talk about the book, the characters, the plot, and how the problems in the story were solved. There will be one 40 minute meeting each week during the period of time that you are in the Center.

5. At the end of the research study you will be encouraged again to take a reading test and to tell the researcher about your interest in reading and the books you like to read.
Keep in mind, there will be times when the answers you give in group discussions will be used in the study and that some of these discussions will be audio taped. However, every effort will be made to make sure that no one can identify you or know what you said or did. Be careful in what you say because there is a possibility that if you say that you want to hurt someone in the future you could get you into trouble.

Not everyone in this study will benefit. A benefit means that something good happens to you. Participation or non-participation in this study will not affect your position or condition in any way while you are at Center. We think benefits for you might be a greater connection and participation within your community, better comprehension about the things you read, and better grades in school.

When we are finished with this study we will write a report about what was learned. This report will not include your name or say that you were in the study.

Audio recording of selected group discussions will be made for further examination of group discussion content. All recording will be conducted in compliance with all directives of the Center. Permission to audio record is required by the University of Toledo. Will you permit Mr. Guy to audio record group discussions during this research procedure? Please indicate your answer by checking one of the boxes below.

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If you have any questions about the study, you can ask. You can call the investigator listed at the top of this page if you have a question.

**If you decide to be in this study, please print and sign your name.**

I, ________________________________, want to be in this research study.

(Print your name here)

Sign your Name: _______________________________ Date: ___________________
Appendix C
Institutional Review Board Human Subject Research Form

PARENTAL OR GUARDIAN - INFORMED CONSENT FORM
A Study to Access the Influence of the Graphic Novel on Increasing the Reading Engagement of Incarcerated Youth.

Principal Investigator:

Purpose: Your child/wards has/have been invited to participate in a research project entitled, A Study to Access the Influence of the Graphic Novel on Increasing the Reading Engagement of Recidivistic Youth. This research project is still being conducted at the University of Toledo under the direction of and The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of graphic novels on the reading engagement and reading attitude of incarcerated juveniles.

Description of Procedures: This research study will take place in the Center. The study will be done in one hour sessions conducted once a week for a period of six months during the period. Participants will be encouraged to do the following:

1. Participants will be asked to take a reading attitude survey and a reading test before and after the study.

2. Participants will then be encouraged to voluntarily participate in reading and discussion groups of selected illustrated novels.

Participant identity and all participant activities are confidential and will be kept secret. All study participants will be identified only by pseudonym on the documentation and all documentation will be kept in a secure location. At the end of the study all confidential materials will be destroyed. Participation or non-participation in this study will have no present or future effect on the situation or condition of your child while at the Center.

Audio recording of selected group discussions will be made for further examination of group discussion content. All recording will be conducted in compliance with all directives of the Center and the University of Toledo. Permission to audio record is required by the University of Toledo. Will you permit to audio record group discussions during this research procedure? Please indicate your answer by checking one of the boxes below.

YES ☐ NO ☐
Initial Here_____ Initial Here_____

After your child/ward has completed his participation, the research team will debrief you and your child/ward about the data, theory, research area under study, and answer any questions you may have about the research.
**Potential Risks:** There are minimal risks to participation in this study, including loss of confidentiality. Participants have the right to stop participation at any point for whatever reason. The questions asked on the surveys are general. It is not anticipated that answering these questions will cause any anxiety. Group discussions are constructed and conducted in a manner that each participant’s contribution is given equal importance. If the participant feels upset or anxious at any point during the discussions or the study, they may stop and withdraw from the study at any time. An outside advocate who is not directly related to the Youth Treatment Center or to the research project will be identified and contact information will be made available.

**Potential Benefits:** The only direct benefit to you as a parent or guardian, if you consent to your child/ward’s participation in this research, may be that you will learn about how reading studies are run and may learn more about reading literacy. Other benefits may include gaining a different perspective of your child/ward and his perception of the world. Potential benefits to your child/ward include an increase in reading comprehension and reading attitude, a possible reduction in delinquent behaviors, a greater connection to his community, and higher grades in school.

**Confidentiality:** The researchers will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you provided this information, or what that information is. The consent forms with signatures will be kept separate from participant responses. The responses will not include names and will be presented to others only when combined with other participant responses. Although we will make every effort to protect confidentiality, there is a low risk that this might be breached.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your refusal to allow your child/ward’s participation in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled and will not have any adverse relationship between your child and the Center. In addition, your child/ward can discontinue participation at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

**Contact Information:** Before you decide to accept this invitation of study participation on the behalf of your child/ward, you may ask any questions that you might have. If you have any questions at any time before, during, or after your child/ward’s participation you should contact a member of the research team. If your child/ward experiences any physical or psychological distress as a result of this research, you should also contact a member of the research team. The Principal investigator is and the student investigator is. If you have questions or concerns beyond those answered by the research team, the Chairperson of the SBE Institutional Review Board may be contacted through the Office of Research on the main campus of the University of Toledo at.

Before you sign this form, please ask any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you. You may take as much time as necessary to think it over.

**SIGNATURE SECTION – Please read carefully**
You are making a decision whether or not to allow your child/ward to participate in this research study. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above, you have had all your questions answered, and that you have decided to allow your child/ward to take part in this research.

The date you sign this document to enroll your child/ward in this study, that is, today's date must fall between the dates indicated at the bottom of the page.

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This Adult Research Informed Consent document has been reviewed and approved by the University of Toledo Social, Behavioral and Educational IRB for the period of time specified in the box below.

Approved Number of Subjects: _____________________
### Appendix D

**Methodology Table**

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| **How do recidivistic youth discuss graphic novels in Book Club?** | 1. Reflective Field Notes for personal account and clarity.  
2. Analytic Field Notes for themes and patterns  
3. Audio transcription to augment and support observations  
4. Video to capture nuanced behaviors and interactions |
| 1. Audio files  
2. Video files  
3. Descriptive Field Notes |  
| **Is there increased reading comprehension of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?** | 1. QRI (5) assessment procedures  
2. Reflective Field Notes for personal account and clarity.  
3. Analytic Field Notes for themes and patterns  
4. Audio transcription to augment and support observations |
| 1. Qualitative Reading Inventory (5) pre and post  
2. Descriptive Field Notes |  
| **Is there improved reading attitude of recidivistic youth when reading graphic novels?** | 1. Elementary Reading Attitude Survey assessment procedures  
2. Reflective Field Notes for personal account and clarity.  
3. Analytic Field Notes for themes and patterns  
4. Audio transcription to augment and support observations  
5. Video to capture nuanced behaviors and interactions |
| 1. Elementary Reading Attitude Survey pre and post  
2. Descriptive Field Notes  
3. Audio files  
4. Video files |  
| **What does it mean to be a facilitator with recidivistic youth in a graphic novel Book Club?** | 1. Reflective Field Notes for personal account and clarity.  
2. Analytic Field Notes for themes and patterns  
3. Audio transcription to augment and support observations  
4. Video to capture nuanced behaviors and interactions |
| 1. Audio files  
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**Appendix E**
EARS Recreational Pretest

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