

Teens and Pleasure Reading: A Taxonomy of Young Teen Readers

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Purpose of the Study

It is generally accepted that pleasure reading has been a neglected aspect of the broad field of library and information studies. Cullinan (2000) points out that we do not know the factors which make a difference in establishing lifetime reading habits or the factors which influence a reader's choice of reading materials. She acknowledges that an understanding of these factors could help schools and libraries plan more effective programmes. Nitecki (1986) concurs, stating "In the voluminous technical literature of information science, little attention is given to reading processes" (p. 229). In 1996, Yu and O'Brien published a comprehensive literature review of research in adult fiction librarianship and concluded that there is an overall lack of research in this area. They point out that the lack of understanding of fiction readers has hampered the development of fiction services in libraries. Towey (2001) points out although 49.4% of annual circulation in eleven American city public libraries was fiction, LIS programmes virtually ignore narrative fiction in favour of factual information sources and there is, overall, a dearth of research on pleasure reading.

The 1996 survey of American attitudes towards libraries entitled Buildings, Books and Bytes: Libraries and Communities in the Digital Age (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 1996) emphasizes the importance of pleasure reading in public libraries as an enduring core component of public library service at a time when the Internet appeared to undermine the public library's role as information provider. A more recent study by D'Elia et al (2007) reinforces this conclusion by demonstrating that while the Internet has

reduced young people's use of the public library as a source of personal information, it has not affected their use of the public library for recreational purposes such as borrowing books to read for pleasure. This finding is further strengthened by a recent survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Estabrook, Witt and Rainie, 2007) which found that Internet users are more than twice as likely to patronize libraries as non-Internet users and that "tech-savvy" members of Generation Y, aged 18 to 30, are the most frequent users of public libraries, with library use declining steadily with age.

Similarly, there are few current studies of the reading habits of Canadian youth. University of Alberta researcher Margaret Mackey conducted a two-year longitudinal study from 1997 to 1999 of 16 students, aged 10 to 14; this study explored how young people process texts in new and traditional media. Young participants explored a variety of texts (print, video, computer game, electronic book, DVD, CD-ROM encyclopedia and CD-ROM storybook) and rich qualitative data describing their responses was collected through diaries, observations and interviews. Mackey reports on her findings in Literacies across media: Playing the text (2002).

Two national, bilingual quantitative studies of Canadian reading habits provide useful background information. Opening Doors for Children (Fasick et al, 2005) investigates the reading habits and public library use patterns of children in grades 4 to 6 (ages 9-12) whereas Reading and Buying Books for Pleasure (2005) examines the reading habits of the adult Canadian population, aged 16 and above. With the exception of Mackey's study, the one group that remains unexamined is younger teens, aged 12-15, and both the recent national studies cited above recommend that the reading habits of this age group be a subject of investigation particularly since several previous studies

(Whitehead, 1977; Hall and Coles, 1998; The Reading Agency, 2000; Nieuwenhuisen, 2001; The National Endowment for the Arts, 2007) have tracked the beginning of the decline of pleasure reading and public library use during this critical age range.

Furthermore, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council (APEC) identifies improving literacy as the key to improving Atlantic economic prospects in its March 2006 Report Card. The international Reading for Change Report (OECD, 2002) notes that one of the key predictors of positive reading literacy performance, more significant than socioeconomic background or parental education, is regular pleasure reading.

The research study discussed in this paper examines the role of recreational or pleasure reading and the public library in the lives of 12-15 year old residents of the Halifax Regional Municipality. The study as a whole was guided by three key research questions:

1. Why do young teens (aged 12-15) read for pleasure?
 - i. What role does reading for pleasure fill in their lives?
 - ii. What are the main barriers to reading for this age group?
 - iii. What are the main motivators to reading for this age group?
2. What strategies do 12-15 year olds use to select leisure reading material?
3. What do 12-15 year olds think of the public library?
 - i. What role does the public library play in their lives?
 - ii. What are the main barriers to public library use for this age group?
 - iii. What are the main motivators to public library use for this age group?

This paper reports on one particular aspect of the broader study: the role of teens' peers in supporting or motivating their recreational reading habit.

Literature Review

In Checking out the Books (2001), University of Sheffield researchers Toyne and Usherwood conducted thirty focus groups to explore these questions and identified several reasons given for recreational reading including escapism, relaxation, practical knowledge, improvement in literacy skills, self-development, self-knowledge, insight into other cultures and historical periods, and aesthetic pleasure. Focus group studies conducted by Glenn (2004) in her investigation of reading groups and by Radway (1984) in her study of romance readers confirm Toyne and Usherwood's findings that recreational readers read for a variety of reasons ranging from escapism and relaxation to self-discovery and self-empowerment, and that reading fulfills an important function in their lives. In all these studies, readers implicitly acknowledge Birkerts' (1994, p. 91) statement that "[fiction reading] plays a vital part in what we might grandly call existential self-formation."

One of the few researchers to undertake a detailed investigation of the everyday life information seeking or ELIS of recreational readers is Catherine Sheldrick Ross (1999, 2001, 2006), who examined committed readers' selection strategies for fiction in the context of information seeking in everyday life. She pointed out that prior research into the accidental discovery of information (Erdelez, 1997; Williamson, 1998) shows that in their everyday lives, people encounter information without necessarily posing a formal query to an information system such as a reference service, an OPAC, or a database. When looking for books, she found that "readers choose books for the pleasure anticipated in the reading itself but then, apparently serendipitously, they encounter

material that helps them in the context of their lives. In effect, these avid readers reported finding without seeking” (Ross, 1999, p. 785). Ross further observed that experienced readers have a well-developed heuristic for making choices, but that it takes a long apprenticeship to build up the meta-knowledge needed to make successful selections. There is thus an important role for intermediaries such as library staff to help novice readers make good choices and thus to encourage them in the reading habit, especially since some researchers (Toyne and Usherwood, 2001; Beers, 1996a, 1996b; Nieuwenhuisen, 2001) report that poor selections can discourage inexperienced or less committed readers from continuing to read for pleasure.

Jessica E. Moyer (2007) used a combination of surveys and interviews to explore the relationship between educational and recreational outcomes in adult reading for pleasure. Her findings describe four categories of educational outcomes deriving from pleasure reading: people and relationships, countries, cultures and history; life enrichment; and different perspectives. She discusses specific recommendations for integrating these findings into public library collections and services.

A few researchers have explored the Everyday Life Information Seeking (ELIS) of teens. Poston-Anderson and Edwards (1993) asked twenty-eight teen girls about the role of information in helping them deal with their life concerns. Few of the participants believed that libraries could help them solve their problems and turned to family, friends or teachers for information instead. In a later study examining how teen girls find information about jobs and education, Edwards and Poston-Anderson (1996) found that their subjects performed little or no formal information seeking; instead, they turned to their mothers and, significantly less often, to their fathers, for advice. They consciously

avoided talking to their friends as well as other adults such as teachers, librarians or counsellors. Julien's (1999) examination of Canadian teens' information seeking for career decision making showed a similar pattern: the teens in her study felt overwhelmed by decision making and did not know where to turn to get information or even what questions to ask to obtain the information they wanted.

Latrobe and Havener (1997) conducted a study of the information-seeking behaviour of eighteen 11th graders, using a print survey and structured interviews to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data. This study examined teens' information needs in six categories: course-related activities, current lifestyles, future plans, relations with others, health, and general information (current events, politics, religion, etc.) The researchers did not examine recreational reading *per se*, but their findings still provide some useful data on information preferences of this small group of teens. In five of the six categories, people were identified as the best sources of information. The exception was general information; for this category, media sources were identified as the best source of information, with people coming second. One teen respondent explained her preference for human information sources in this way: "When asking people, I consider their expertise. If you don't understand what a person is saying, you can ask them [sic] to explain it a little further. You can't ask a book to explain what it means right now. I go to people because of their interactive nature" (p. 197). Latrobe and Havener conclude, "...the findings of this study illuminate the central role played by people as information links and providers. Students relied upon a broad spectrum of people when seeking information. In fact, the interpersonal networks of students appear to determine the framework in which all information seeking takes place, therefore emphasizing the role

of interpersonal interactions in gathering information is a critical component in the instruction process. Because students rely so heavily on people as information sources, librarians should seize opportunities to deepen students' understanding of people as information resources. Librarians can promote themselves as accessible and valuable information resources. They can also integrate themselves into students' interpersonal networks, working with parents, teachers and others to develop and market programmes that focus on students' needs and the interpersonal aspects of information-seeking behaviour" (p. 199).

Agosto and Hughes-Hassell's (2006a, 2006b) investigation of the ELIS of inner-city American teens develops a theoretical model in which teens' developmental needs are at the centre of their information seeking. The researchers identify seven independent variables (the social self, the emotional self, the reflective self, the physical self, the creative self, the cognitive self, and the sexual self), each of which is associated with various types of information need. This study also confirms the work of previous researchers (Edwards and Poston Anderson, 1996; Latrobe and Havener, 1997; Julien, 1999) in that the teen participants preferred human sources of information whenever possible. "The participants decided which people to consult based on established human relationships, question topics, and the locations of their information seeking....The participants evidenced general tendencies toward relying on easily accessible, familiar sources and channels" (Agosto and Hughes-Hassell, 2006b, p. 1425).

Methodology

Data collection consisted of a series of nine focus group discussions with a total of sixty-eight 12 to 15 year olds, held at junior high schools in the Halifax Regional School Board. All students volunteered to participate; they and their parents/guardians were given a written information sheet and signed a consent form prior to the discussions. Focus groups were held at noon in a school classroom and refreshments (pizza and juice) were provided.

The sample for this research was required to be substantial enough to allow for different dimensions in the target population (gender, rural/urban milieu, self-assessed enjoyment and frequency of reading) to be represented. In this study, focus groups consisted of an average of 7-8 participants each. Seventy percent of participants were girls and thirty percent were boys. Structured questions were used to permit the cross-comparison of responses between groups. All focus group discussions were tape recorded, but confidentiality of respondents was assured, and the names of individual students, schools or school districts were not identified on the transcripts. Pseudonyms are used in all reports of focus group discussions. Transcripts were imported into QSR NUD*IST for coding and analysis.

Overall, analysis proceeded using a grounded theory approach in the manner of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1992) in which data central to the focus of the inquiry was gathered through a series of focus group discussions, and themes emerged from the data itself, through a process of inductive analysis. As Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 23) describe the process, analysis began “with an area of study and what [was] relevant to that area [was] allowed to emerge.” QSR was used to assist in shaping

understanding of the data, to create categories out of the data, and to link and explore these categories to form and test theories “grounded” in the data. The qualitative phase did not begin with any *a priori* hypotheses or speculations about the likely outcomes of the focus group discussions. As Mellon (1990, pp. 78-9) points out: “The goal of open coding is to identify those categories that appear central to the study and from which the grounded theory will be constructed....When the focus of analysis has been narrowed to a few key categories, the researcher begins selective coding. Examination of the data proceeds only in relation to these key categories as the researcher attempts to identify the core categories, the main theme of the study around which all other categories revolve.”

Results and Analysis

During focus group discussions, participants were asked to reflect on the reasons why they choose to read for pleasure rather than engaging in another favourite leisure pursuit. Many teens were able to articulate clear reasons why they find pleasure reading a rewarding activity. In general, their responses were echo the findings of Radway (1984), Toyne and Usherwood (2001), Glenn (2004), and Moyer (2007); in other words, the young teens who participated in this study read for pleasure for the same reasons that adults read for pleasure: to be entertained, to pass the time, to relax, to exercise their imaginations, to escape, to clarify vocational goals, and so forth. However, one striking difference between the adult readers described in the research literature and the young readers in this study quickly became apparent: for many young teen readers, reading takes place almost exclusively in a social context and is seen as an effective way to cement peer friendships. These teens actively seek to read the same materials as their

closest friends and use reading (talking about reading, exchanging reading material, following the same series) as a form of social bonding.

In order to obtain a more detailed analysis of the role of personal influences on reading choices, a detailed analysis of focus group transcripts was conducted. First, all transcripts were coded for simple demographic variables derived from the survey, including gender, age, and rural/urban milieu. Second, transcripts were coded for participants' self-identified reading frequency. Active readers were classified into two subcategories: avid and occasional. Participants who indicated that they didn't like reading, they didn't have time for reading or that they simply didn't read for pleasure were classified as Reluctant Readers.¹

Table 1: Preliminary Taxonomy of Teen Readers

TYPE OF READER	HOW OFTEN DO YOU READ FOR PLEASURE?	HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT READING FOR PLEASURE?	NUMBER OF TEENS
Avid	Daily	Preferred leisure activity	38
Occasional	Weekly	Preferred leisure activity	20
Reluctant	"Never"	Don't like reading; don't have time for reading; don't read	10

Third, transcripts were coded for participants' self-identified feelings about the importance of their peers as an influence on their reading choices. Teens who rated friends as a "very important influence" or "some influence" were initially coded as

¹ The term "reluctant" was selected rather than "nonreaders" since the survey analysis revealed that, despite their self-definition as inactive readers, these teens did read although their level of reading involvement is significantly lower than that of Avid or Occasional readers.

Communal Readers; teens who rated friends as exerting “no influence” were initially rated as Solitary Readers. However, this preliminary bi-partite coding scheme was insufficient to capture the full range of focus group responses, and, after careful analysis of the transcripts using the constant comparison technique, the Communal code was refined into two subcodes: Social Communal Readers rely on their immediate friends for reading encouragement and support; Detached Communal Readers rely on peers other than their immediate friendship group for reading encouragement and support. However, while Detached Communal Readers could, theoretically, be Avid, Occasional or Reluctant Readers, this pattern was only actually observed for very Avid Readers. Table 2 describes the emerging taxonomy of teen readers; Table 3 provides a comparison of the proportion of male and female teens in each category.

Table 2: Taxonomy of Teen Readers

	AVID	OCCASIONAL	RELUCTANT
SOCIAL COMMUNAL	Avid Social Communal	Occasional Social Communal	Reluctant Social Communal
DETACHED COMMUNAL	Avid Detached Communal	<i>(Occasional Detached Communal)</i>	<i>(Reluctant Detached Communal)</i>
SOLITARY	Avid Solitary	Occasional Solitary	Reluctant Solitary

Table 3: Taxonomy of Teen Readers by Gender

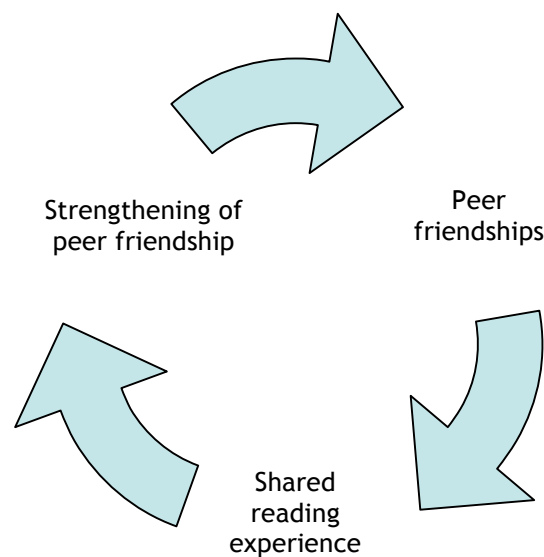
	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Avid Social	1 (9%)	11 (91%)	12
Avid Detached	2 (12.5%)	14 (87.5%)	16
Avid Solitary	4 (40%)	6 (60%)	10
Occasional Social	0	11 (100%)	11
Occasional Detached	0	0	0
Occasional Solitary	7 (78%)	2 (22%)	9
Reluctant Social	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	2
Reluctant Detached	0	0	0
Reluctant Solitary	5 (62.5%)	3 (37.5%)	8
TOTAL	20	48	68

By examining the intersection of the codes for self-assessed reading habit and level of peer influence, a richer and more layered view of teen readers emerges which more clearly reveals the importance of reading community for various types of teen readers. Each of these categories of teen readers exhibit unique feelings and attitudes towards the act of reading for pleasure. The remainder of this paper will compare and contrast three distinct groups of avid readers; avid social communal readers, avid detached communal readers and avid solitary readers.

a. Avid Social Communal Readers

Avid Social Readers experience a clear and mutually reinforcing relationship between friendship and reading. Reading exists in a “virtuous circle” in which friends encourage reading for pleasure and shared reading experiences solidify friendships. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Social Communal Reading Pattern



Avid Social Communal Readers want to read the same materials as their friends to reinforce their membership in the group and to avoid the feeling of being left out, as Cal notes: *“I read mostly because if my friends have read a book I want to read it to find out what it’s really about....If your friends had read a book and were talking about it and you couldn’t read you wouldn’t know what was going on, you’d be left out.”* Kate offers

similar reasons for reading: *“I like reading books my friends have recommended or read so that if they're talking about the book I can get in on the conversation rather than sitting there and not saying anything.”*

Like the teens in the studies by Poston-Anderson and Edwards (1993, 1996) and Latrobe and Havener (1997), these readers express a strong preference for face-to-face personal reading recommendations and do not use library catalogues or the Internet to find reading material. Overall, this group has fairly unsophisticated selection strategies but their lack of a well-developed heuristic is not problematic as their reading choices are largely determined by their friendship group. They rarely are in the situation of having to make an independent reading selection. When they do make an independent selection, they rely heavily on the physical appearance of the book in making their choice, as Karen describes: *“I can never remember authors, so I look for names that look familiar or for titles that I like the sound of. Then I'll read the back cover and a page or two. If I get to page 3 and I don't like it, I'll put it back.”* Younger teens, aged 12 to 13, also rely on their mothers to select reading material for them, as Kathleen describes in the following passage: *“I hate choosing books. I normally read series so I won't have to choose as many [titles]. I get my mom to pick out books for me because she's good at it and I get frustrated. I don't think I'm good at it at all. Sometimes I read books I've already read to avoid having to find something new and making a bad choice. I just hate choosing books. I'd rather have someone recommend something to me.”*

For Avid Social Communal Readers, reading exists within a mutually accepted comfort zone of shared reading choices. As Social Readers, these teens exhibit little risk-taking or experimentation in their reading selections and read within a fairly limited and

homogeneous range of themes and genres. They approach reading as consumers, choosing currently popular materials with appealing covers². Trendy series fiction, particularly of the “chick lit” variety, is especially in-style with this group, as series books simplify selection decisions and lend themselves well to communal reading: books can be shared among the group and, in many cases, do not need to be read in strict sequence. Series titles frequently mentioned include The Clique, Gossip Girls, Madison Finn, The True Confessions of Georgia Nicolson, and Mates and Dates. Cal, the lone male Social Communal Reader, identified comics and fantasy series as his favourite reading material, stating: “*A lot of the kids in my neighbourhood are all reading this one series, The Keys to the Kingdom by Garth Nix, and a new book just came out and I finished it and everyone else wanted to borrow it. I’ve passed it on.*” Magazines are also popular reading choices. No Avid Social Communal Readers mentioned reading nonfiction for pleasure. The following discussion between a group of female urban Avid Social Communal Readers illustrates a common selection process for this type of reader:

Laura: One person will start reading a series and if they like it they’ll tell everyone and then we all read the same series. One person will recommend something and word gets around that it’s good.

Hilary: One series that pretty much everyone, every girl, in the whole school wants to read is The Clique. It’s all about this rich girl and her friends and they’re so mean to this other girl but finally she gets into The Clique.

² Several Avid Social Communal Readers commented on the value of product placements in series books such as The Gossip Girls and The Clique in helping them with consumer purchases. One Avid Social Communal Reader, Lauren, even exclaimed that she would never have become a regular patron of Starbucks if it hadn’t been for repeated references to the coffee shop in The Clique.

Sara: They aren't great books but they are fun. The girls are rich and popular and wear great clothes and go on vacations. It's kind of like The Gossip Girls. All of the books have an ad for The Gossip Girls on the back.... In the back of a lot of books there are suggestions that say If you liked this book then you'll like these other books. That usually helps me because if I like one book or one author or one series, then they suggest other books that I'll probably like as well.

Laura: I always look for series. I always get disappointed when I'm reading a really good book and it's the only book, it's by itself and there aren't any more. I really like series.

Social Communal Readers don't just share recommendations; they also frequently exchange the reading materials themselves amongst members of their friendship circle:

Ellie: Yeah, I do that [share books] all the time with one of my friends. Like the Madison Finn books, she loves them just as much as I do. I have almost all of the Madison Finn collection so we're always trading books back and forth. I'll read one and give it to her and she'll read it and give it back to me.

Karen: I share books with my friends. My friend Maggie has about 10 of my books and she may never give them back.

Focus group participants classified as Avid Social Communal Readers are almost exclusively female (only one male participant, Cal, rated his friends as important influences and is classified as an Avid Social Communal Reader) and urban. They all indicate high levels of positive adult (usually parental) encouragement to read and all are regular public library users, although they are dissatisfied with the library's often

incomplete collection of series books and with the long waitlists for current popular books. The following statement by Kathleen is typical: *“I was reading a series last year and there are 12 books in the series but the library only had 3 of them. I got really frustrated because I didn’t want to go and buy the rest of them, but the library never got them in. I never did finish that series.”* They also feel that the library should provide a more social atmosphere, so that teens are encouraged to spend time there, reading and socializing with their friends. They are all confident that they will continue to read avidly in the future, and that reading will continue to be a social, shared activity.

b. Avid Detached Communal Readers

Avid Detached Communal Readers share several features with Avid Social Communal Readers: both groups indicate generally high levels of positive adult (usually parental) encouragement to read and are regular public library users. Detached Communal Readers, however, exhibit some significant differences in their attitude to reading and in the role of personal influences. These readers tend to consider themselves more “serious” readers than Avid Social Communal Readers and see their reading choices as intimately linked to their identity: they dislike the predictability of series fiction and read a wide variety of themes and genres, often deliberately selecting challenging or “edgy” titles. Most of the teens in this group self-identify as very strong readers, often reading well above their grade level, and read a mixture of adult and YA titles, both fiction and nonfiction.

Avid Detached Readers are adamant in their dislike of receiving reading recommendations or advice from their friends. They resent the fact that a friend,

particularly someone with less sophisticated reading skills, might want to influence them in their reading choices. Avid Detached Readers tend to view reading recommendations from friends as unwanted pressure and, potentially, even a threat to their friendship as the following discussion between a group of detached readers illustrates:

Isobel: Yeah, I had a friend recommend a book to me and I just didn't want to read it because she had said it was so good....Yeah, if someone says this is the best book ever, I just won't get around to it...ever.

Nicola: If someone tells me it's a great book, it's like it's THEIR book, and that makes me not want to read it. I want to find books for myself. I have to find my own books. I've got to be a rebel.

Miriam: I agree. If someone recommends a book it's more likely that I won't want to read it.

In contrast, some Avid Detached readers see themselves as trendsetters or opinion leaders and enjoy dispensing reading recommendations to others; these teens view themselves as gatekeepers to reading, and enjoy discovering new titles or new authors and passing on this information to their friends and, sometimes, to their families. Others, such as Roslyn, consider gatekeeping a further potential for rejection and disappointment if the recipients of their advice fail to enjoy the suggested title.

Catherine: When I read a good book I recommend it to my friends so now a bunch of people are asking to read this one book. I actually give them the book when I'm finished with it.

Miriam: I'm the one that everyone comes to for recommendations because I have the most books. There's like a layer of books in my room.

Isobel: My dad doesn't really influence me but if there was someone in my family who reads the same as me it would be my dad. My dad reads fantasy and science fiction and horror and he borrows books from me. It's more like me influencing him because there's no way he's going to go out and buy his own books. I'm giving him books I read 3 years ago.

Roslyn: I don't like lending or recommending my books to other people because sometimes I will love the book and my friend will say 'it's just okay' and that frustrates me. I want my friends to love it too.

Similarly, many Avid Detached Readers also dislike receiving reading recommendations from adults. Isobel was the sole Avid Detached Reader to report a positive relationship with a local librarian: *"There's one librarian at my library who likes the same books as me. There's Neil Gaiman and Garth Nix and a whole bunch of authors we have in common so I'll always ask him. He gives me good suggestions."* Other readers in this group had never considered approaching a librarian for assistance in selecting reading material:

Kim: Actually, that's [asking a librarian for reading advice] never occurred to me! I know there are grown-ups there [in the library] and they put the books out but I've never thought that they've probably read quite a few of them or that they would know what people my age are interested in.

Catherine: I wouldn't ask a public librarian for help. I'd rather find it myself or just wander up and down the aisles.

In the following two quotes, Miriam and Roslyn criticize their perception of adult-centrism in librarians' interactions with teens:

Miriam: I usually don't [ask librarians for advice] because they [librarians] suggest books that are under my level, a lot. They look at the way I look and how old I am and they suggest books that are too young or too easy for me.

Roslyn: Yeah, they look at us and say 'grade 7' and I hate it when people do that! I may be in grade 7 but I read books for adults. It's, like, don't judge me because I'm this old or this height.

Teens are in the process of separating from their childhoods and preparing to enter adulthood, so they are eager to avoid any suggestion that they are still immature dependent children. They may feel angry or threatened if adults suggest that they are childlike in their intellectual ability or physical appearance. In the case of books, teens, especially Avid Detached Readers, want to have both their maturity and reading skill recognized and affirmed, and are particularly insulted if this does not occur. Readers' advisory is a very sensitive aspect of a librarian's interaction with the reading public because a patron's self-identity is often intimately connected with their reading preferences. Any reading recommendation which is perceived as a threat to a patron's fundamental identity could be very damaging to the librarian/patron relationship and could seriously undermine the patron's trust in librarians and libraries as useful sources of advice.

Avid Detached Readers thus avoid developing a reading community with their immediate friends. Instead, they actively seek other, more distant, opportunities for peer support for their reading. Several Avid Detached Readers established a virtual reading community through social networking tools such as FaceBook.

Kim: I use the computer a lot. I don't know if you know what Facebook

is, but it's a way for people to communicate on the Internet, and everyone has their own profile. On their profile, there's a lot of personal information and one of them is favourite books. I look on my friends' profiles and see what they list as their favourite books. This is the best way, because they are around my age and they like the same things as me and I know them. I have hundreds of friends on Facebook but a lot of them are people who don't go to my school, people I don't see all the time, and I'll just pick someone at random and read about their favourite books. Then I'll go to the library with their list of good books and look at them myself and see if I want to read them. I never tell them that I'm doing that unless it's a book I really like.

Rebecca: A person who has influenced me a lot is someone I met online through FaceBook. She puts book recommendations on her website and I've read most of them and they are all really good. We've never met, we just know each other online. One of the other ways I choose books is through this website called Buzznet. You can type in your favourite book or movie and it will tell you who else liked that book, so then I can look at that person and see what books she or he has listed as favourites, and I read them.

Several other Detached Avid Readers were members of a teen book club run by a local independent bookstore:

Isobel: Joining Book Club was the best thing I ever did. We meet once a month and talk about the books we read that month, not just the "assigned book" but all the books we read. It's great. If I hated a book and someone else loved it, we can argue about it. No one gets mad if you don't agree. I use book club for lots of

recommendations about what to read. I heard someone talking about how much they loved Uglies and so I went right out and read that book. I might not have found it if it hadn't been for book club.

Miriam: Book club is nothing like school. We don't have to be all serious and "right"; we can just talk about what we liked and what we didn't like and no one's right and no one's wrong.

These "detached" reading communities function as safe spaces for these avid readers to discuss and share their reading interests with peers without threatening their primary friendship relationships. The relative anonymity of these reading communities gives Avid Detached Readers the peer encouragement and support they desire as well as the opportunity to give and receive reading recommendations in a risk-free environment. Avid Detached Communal Readers are very satisfied with their reading community and are confident that they will continue to read avidly in the future.

Avid Detached Communal Readers are predominantly urban and female, although two males also fit this profile. Detached readership appears to be unique to the Avid Reader group, probably because of the extra effort that is required to find and join a detached reading community: no Occasional or Reluctant Readers were identified as using this strategy.

c. Avid Solitary Readers

Focus group participants were initially classified as Solitary Readers if they indicated that their friends exert "no influence" on their reading. However, on closer analysis of the transcripts using the constant comparison technique, it became apparent

that Avid Solitary Readers can be further subdivided into two groups: those readers who are solitary by choice (Voluntary Solitary Readers) and those who are solitary by necessity (Involuntary Solitary Readers)). The two subgroups exhibit some important differences in their attitude towards reading communities and in their level of self-sufficiency as readers.

Avid Voluntary Solitary Readers simply don't see any reason to share or discuss their reading with their peers. Males and female readers are evenly represented in the Avid Voluntary Solitary Readers group; however, there are some significant differences between male and female teens in terms of the role of adult mentorship of their reading habit. The male teens in this category report high levels of positive adult encouragement to read whereas female teens feel they have received low levels of adult mentorship. For example, Mark describes his father's role in the development of his love of reading: *"My dad recommends books to me. He got me reading Terry Pratchett, his adult books. They're really good. He also likes Elmore Leonard and he got me reading those books, too. My dad has really encouraged me to read more challenging books...Like Sherlock Holmes and Patrick O'Brian. My dad likes books that were written a long time ago and the language is different, the English is different, and it's interesting to read and you learn different words."* In contrast, Josie describes the start of her reading habit: *"My family really doesn't like to read but I love to read. I remember in elementary school a teacher read a really good book to the class and then I got it and read it and it was fun. And that's how I started reading on my own."* Jessica also reports receiving little encouragement to read from her family: *"My family doesn't read at all. My mom says she doesn't have time for reading and my stepdad said the last book he read was in*

college. My mom doesn't understand it when I go to my room and I read for like four hours because I'm stuck in a really good book. I think I became a reader because when I was younger my sister would always have the TV, she'd have the remote so I couldn't watch my shows, so I started reading. It was kind of self-defense." The lack of early positive reinforcement for their reading habit appears to make girls less likely to use their pleasure reading as an opportunity to make social connections later in life. The solitary nature of their early reading experiences appears to persist into their teens years; for these teen girls, reading has always been and continues to be something they do for pleasure, but in isolation, and is not a habit to be shared with either friends or family.

Both male and female Avid Voluntary Solitary Readers have effective selection strategies and feel confident and self-sufficient as readers: they enjoy reading, but it is something they keep to themselves. For the boys in particular, this preference for solitary reading could be a reflection of the "socially unacceptable" nature of male pleasure reading observed by Cherland (1994) and Leng (1968): some boys may be reluctant to share their reading with their friends because reading for pleasure is not recognized as a valid male pastime.

Mark: I don't usually talk about books with my friends, not often.

It's not something we talk about and we don't share books.

Art: I'd have to really like a book a lot to talk about it with my friends.

Alex: I don't really share books, either.

Although male Avid Solitary Readers do not join in a peer reading community, they are confident that they will continue to read avidly — and solitarily -- in the future.

In contrast, Avid Involuntary Solitary Readers are females who have non-reading friends. Only two participants fell into this category: both were females living in an economically disadvantaged rural community. In both cases, their friends are actively opposed to reading and see it as a “useless activity.” These Avid Solitary Readers acutely feel the lack of peer support; they wish they had peer support for their reading, feel isolated in their pleasure reading and state that they read for pleasure “despite their friends” and, in one case, despite their family as well.

Mandy: For me, reading is solitary because my friends don't read the same kind of books that I do. They read magazines and watch TV and surf on the net for 6 hours a day. ... Ever since my parents divorced and my stepfather moved in, since he retired from the military, all he does is sit on his butt and play videogames or play on the computer. He just wastes his time. I watch him and I swore I wouldn't be like that, so I read.

Whitney: A lot of my friends don't really like to read. They like to watch a lot of TV. I like mystery books. I think [kids read less in junior high school] because if your friends don't read or if they think reading is for nerds, then you won't read either.

These Avid Involuntary Solitary Readers do not participate in any detached reading communities, either online or through book clubs, either because they are unaware of such opportunities or because they are unavailable in their community. These readers also have weak selection strategies, often choosing books fairly randomly, and frequently have difficulties finding books they enjoy; they express the hope that they will

continue to read in the future, but seem to lack confidence about their future reading habits.

Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that there is considerable diversity in the role of peer groups in supporting teen pleasure reading and library programming which acknowledges and responds to this diversity will be most effective in serving the widest range of teen readers.

Social Communal Readers consider pleasure reading to be intimately connected with their friendship circle, and these teens might respond positively to a programme that combines light reading and socializing. Social Communal Readers tend to be female and read a fairly narrow range of popular series books, “chick lit” fiction, and magazines. In contrast, Voluntary Solitary Readers are not influenced by their peers in their reading choices and would probably not be attracted to socially-oriented reading programmes. While some Solitary Readers have fairly well-developed selection strategies, others struggle to find appealing books and are frequently frustrated and discouraged by their lack of success. These readers would benefit from readers’ advisory services such as thematic book lists in print and electronic format and would probably also respond positively to the opportunity to share book reviews and book ratings through an interactive teen library website.

Teens who fit the profile of the Involuntary Solitary Reader would be particular beneficiaries of increased library outreach and efforts at relationship building with teen patrons. These teens feel isolated from their peer groups and sometimes even from their

families in their enjoyment of reading, and would likely welcome the opportunity to combine reading and socializing (and might even make some new friends who share their appreciation for pleasure reading). These readers would benefit from social programmes and would also benefit from increased readers' advisory services, both active and passive, as these readers tend to have difficulties finding appropriate reading material and often become discouraged and frustrated by their lack of success.

While Detached Readers avoid sharing books with their closest friends, many Detached Readers would respond positively to online or face-to-face book clubs or library-based networking opportunities that facilitate the sharing of book reviews with peers from outside their friendship circle. These teens, who see themselves as trendsetters or opinion leaders, would also enjoy the opportunity to share their opinions and book recommendations with library staff members.

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