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What is Adapted in Youth Adaptations?: A Critical Comparative Content Analysis of Military Memoirs Repackaged as Young Adult Literature

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Abstract: Adapting and rebranding general market memoirs for the young adult literature market is a growing trend in the publishing world. Grounded in Critical Youth Scholarship, this study explores this trend through an analysis of two general market memoirs of Navy SEALs and their revised and repackaged youth market counterparts. Using a systematic approach we call *Critical Comparative Content Analysis* (CCCA), this study found that the youth adaptations were substantially altered to produce worlds stripped of complexity, offering sanitized versions of military action, heroism, and humanity. We argue that through content changes, youth readers are denied access to complex portrayals of the world, as well as questions that might arise with and through them. Instead, youth readers are constructed as needing explicit life lessons and reductive depictions of lived experience. For scholars and teachers, this study demonstrates the importance of inquiries that not only critically approach the content of YAL, but also foreground and trouble limiting conceptions of youth readers themselves. This study also highlights the value of *comparison* as a conceptual and pedagogical tool for carrying out this work. Further, this study recommends continued methodological innovation oriented toward genre-specific qualities of young adult literature, including its production and marketing.

Keywords: young adult literature, content analysis, critical youth studies, teaching literature, memoir

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Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: how they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

—Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2009)

Introduction[1]

Scholarship in literacy and learning demonstrates the importance of conceptualizing storytelling as an expression of power hierarchies (Apple, 2004; Applebee, 1996; Berchini, 2016; Burroughs & Smagorinsky, 2009). In our study, we took up this conceptualization and focused on how stories are told differently across audiences. We looked at stories originally marketed without any overt specification about who might be reading them, and then we compared those stories to their youth market counterparts, i.e., narratives adapted for, and marketed to, youth readers. In alignment with the quote above, the premise of our study was that such a comparison would allow teachers, students, and researchers to gain new insights about the relationship between power and storytelling, particularly in the context of the young adult literature market.

Although adapting texts for children and youth is a longstanding practice that has been studied extensively in the field of children's literature (for a recent example, see Lefebvre, 2013), in this paper, we draw on theory from the interdisciplinary field of Critical Youth Studies (e.g., Lesko, 2012), and current empirical scholarship on the representation of youth experiences in YAL (defined in this paper as literature marketed for a teenage audience) (e.g., Petrone, Sarigianides, & Lewis, 2015), to examine a specific, contemporary trend within that practice – the publication of general market memoirs alongside rapidly re-published YAL adaptations of those memoirs. These memoir pairs are typically non-fiction, first person accounts of the lived experiences of people who occupy a space in the national consciousness, earning their place, ostensibly, through individual merit and achievement (Rawlins, 2012). Adaptations often appear with an updated cover, a different title, and

[1] We acknowledge that there is a gender spectrum and that there are a number of pronoun choices we can make when referring to individuals in our writing. Throughout this article we use "he" to refer to individuals who identify as male, "she" to refer to individuals who identify as female, and the gender-neutral singular pronoun "they" when referring to individuals who identify as gender-neutral.

revised content designed to appeal to a youth audience. While the enormous buying power of youth audiences (Cart, 2010) has provided the publishing industry with reason to pursue a youth market, we wondered what youth adaptations—when compared with their general market counterparts—suggest about the perceived needs and interests of youth readers.

To pursue this inquiry, we examined two general-market memoirs of Navy SEALs published in 2011 and then revised, repackaged, and resold on the youth market in 2012. Using a systematic approach we call *Critical Comparative Content Analysis* (CCCA), we ask:

1. How do the memoirs in a given text pair (a general market memoir and its youth adaptation) compare?
2. How is thematic content (related to, e.g., morality, military, masculinity, gender, and race) rendered differently for youth audiences?

Theorizing Adolescence/ts

Since the publication of Hall's landmark volume on adolescent psychology in 1904, adolescence—in many US and Western contexts—has been characterized as a biological and psychological phase experienced during the teenage years. Disciplinary meanings of adolescence, particularly from developmental psychology (e.g., Hall, 1904), normalize a set of youth stereotypes involving raging hormones, peer influence, risk-taking, irrationality, impulsiveness, moodiness, and so on—all qualities presumed to be associated with what neurologists Jensen and Nutt (2015) call "the teenage brain." While making a distinction between teenage brains and adult brains is empirically dubious (Moshman, 2011), such distinctions seem to arise in casual conversation with enormous ease.

However, historical analyses (Kett, 1977; Lesko, 2012; Palladino, 1996) make clear that these definitions and characterizations are not universal. Rather, as one group of scholars in Critical Youth Studies (CYS) has theorized, adolescence can be understood as a *social category* that is persistently mobilized – both positively and negatively—vis-à-vis social, economic, and political agendas and ideologies (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015). Conceptualizations of the needs, capabilities, and responsibilities of youth vary radically across cultural groups, geographies, and histories (Rogoff, 2003). Taking up the contextual complexity of adolescence as a social construct, we focus in this study on adolescence as it is mobilized in the U.S. through the YAL publishing industry.

While adolescent-ness generally brings to mind "impulsiveness," "rebelliousness" or "risk," Groenke, Haddix, Glenn, Kirkland, Price-Dennis, and Coleman-King (2015) underscore the role of race in the construct of American adolescence/ts. They explain, "The murders of Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Renisha McBride, Trayvon Martin, and Jordan Davis—and too many others—make it quite clear: certain social constructs of adolescence/ts get certain adolescents killed" (p. 35). In particular, Black male youth in the U.S. are—paradoxically—–interpreted through prototypical tropes of adolescence highlighting impulsivity and rebellion, and simultaneously denied youth subject positions through their characterization as existential threat: for example, "a superhuman demon," "a black brute," or a "superpredator" (Bouie, 2014).

Looming over such paradoxes is the specter of whiteness—that is, the multifarious constructing and preserving of whiteness as supremacy, which has long been inseparable from dominant understandings of adolescence; Lesko (2012) writes:

> Adolescence became a social space in which progress or degeneration was visualized,

> embodied, measured, and affirmed. In this way adolescence was a technology of "civilization" and progress, and of white, male, bourgeois supremacy. (p. 29)

In U.S. school settings, management of this social space might take the form of character education programs that attempt to indoctrinate young people into cultural constructions of "virtuous" and "adult" behavior (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2004).

Despite the diverse experiences of American youth, the predominant presumption of "youth depravity" (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2004) — a belief that all youth are inclined toward what is perceived as unvirtuous, i.e., sex, drugs, and violence—often replaces intersectional conceptions of youth with a simple adult v. adolescent binary.

These constructions of youth resonate with predominant beliefs about youth readers in U.S. schools: that they should be matched with age-appropriate lessons (Sulzer & Thein, 2016) and that they are "passive recipients of books' social messages" (Sarigianides, 2012, p. 225). Further, the tendency for YAL to be interpreted via "lessons" or "messages" becomes layered with social, cultural, and historical implications, as the market dynamics shaping YAL publishing tend to downplay diverse youth representations and shape the content for white, middle class audiences (Taxel, 2002).

Drawing on this historical and theoretical context, we approach our study of general market and youth adapted memoirs with an understanding of adolescence as a socially-constructed category that forwards particular, often limiting and de-humanizing mythologies of the needs and desires of young people. This understanding of adolescence serves as a lens for our study, helping us to interpret ways in which adapted elements of the general market memoirs reflect a set of beliefs and perceptions about what youth readers need, desire, and ought to learn from YAL.

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Situating Our Study

We follow other youth researchers (Dillabough & Kennelly, 2010; Giroux, 2009; Sukarieh & Tannock, 2015) who situate their inquiries in specific markets and events that reveal how adolescence is (re)produced through particular social conditions that, in turn, become engines for capital. We chose to focus our attention on Navy SEAL memoirs and their adapted counterparts because they provided a useful opportunity to pinpoint and explore the positioning of youth readers within the YAL market in a clearly marked historical moment that sparked a proliferation of merchandizing across genres (movies, video games, and books): that is, the 2011 SEAL Team Six mission resulting in Osama Bin Laden's death.

Young Adults in Young Adult Literature

Teachers and scholars have long—and successfully—advocated for the inclusion of YAL in schools. Coats (2011) explains that YAL has "come of age" as a destination literature with its own "constellation of concerns that mark it as distinctive from literature for either children or adults" (p. 317).

YAL's tradition of literary criticism, however, is relatively new. Hill (2016) notes that while scholarship in children's literature has developed critical approaches to constructs of *children* and *childhood*, scholars still need to "develop critical methodologies that explore how our perceptions of adolescence are caught and shaped by the literature written by adults for teenagers" (p. 19).

Recent scholarship has taken up this call. Rather than evaluating YAL primarily on what it might *do* for youth, this line of scholarship looks closely and critically at how YAL *represents* the experiences of youth. For instance, Parsons (2016) found that YAL tends to offer a universal view of fat female protagonists as food, weight, and self-image obsessed. Hill & Darragh (2016) found that poverty is largely depicted in YAL as an urban problem that is best solved through help from friends and family rather than institutional supports. Meyer (2013) found that YAL tends to treat intellectual disability differently from physical disability, marginalizing the former and humanizing the latter. Lopez-Ropero (2012) found that in YAL, bullying is depicted not as a deviant behavior, but as a normative adolescent behavior linked to social control. Finally, critical studies of the representation LGBTQ issues in YAL have found a dearth of YAL representing bisexual experiences (Epstein, 2014) and have pinpointed the problematics of discourses of violence and sex in queer YAL (Clark & Blackburn, 2016).

Notably, scholars have also developed critical methodologies that attend to the ways in which adolescence itself—as a social, cultural, and historical construct—is depicted in YAL (Hill, 2016; Petrone, et al., 2015; Thein & Sulzer, 2015; Trites, 1998). Grounded in CYS (e.g., Lesko, 2012), this body of work emphasizes that YAL is not simply a literary genre about youth written for youth, but part of a larger cultural imagination about the place of youth in society. To approach this topic, scholars have interpreted YAL by emphasizing power (Trites, 1998), genre (Waller, 2009), cultural narratives (Petrone, et al., 2015), and narrative style (Thein & Sulzer, 2015).

Our inquiry builds upon and broadens these critical perspectives by analyzing YAL—and the ideologies of youth it promotes—within the publishing and marketing contexts that surround the production of YAL. The recent proliferation of adapted memoirs in the YAL market (see Appendix A) allows a unique and useful entry point for such analysis. The adaptations examined in the current study are part of this larger market trend in YAL; to situate them further, we turn to how these particular adaptations emerged as an economic response to the death of Osama Bin Laden.

Navy SEALs in the Public Eye

The death of Osama Bin Laden propelled the work of U.S. Navy SEALs into the national spotlight. SEALs are elite soldiers who endure intense training in multiple conditions to attain their rank. Since SEAL Team Six's completion of Operation Neptune Spear, which culminated in Bid Laden's death, the once clandestine force has become far more visible. Increasing public interest in once covert elite soldiers has been met with commodification of SEAL identity (Crowell, 2015), an irony not lost on the satirical newspaper *The Onion* with a headline reading "Navy Forms Elite New SEAL Team to Write Best-Selling Tell-All Books."

Howard E. Wasdin and Eric Greitens were among the Navy SEALs whose stories of service were published as memoirs. Both memoirs appeared on the general market in 2011 and were re-published as youth adaptations in 2012 with revisions to the covers, titles, and content. To understand the quick turnaround, consider the general market publication date was the same year Bin Laden was killed, a time

when the life experiences of SEALs quickly became more valuable than ever to television, Hollywood, and book publishers. The Wasdin memoir was rushed to press ahead of its scheduled publication date with an order nearly four times the original to meet demand (Lewis, 2011), and the Greitens memoir experienced what book reviewer Jennifer Schlessler (2011) calls the "Bin Laden Bump" as his memoir landed on the *New York Times* Best Seller List.

With successful performances on the general market, the Wasdin and Greitens memoirs were enlisted for service as youth adaptations. The Wasdin memoir, *SEAL Team Six: Memoirs of an Elite Navy SEAL Sniper,* was adapted for youth as *I Am a SEAL Team Six Warrior: Memoirs of an American Soldier*. The memoirs chronicle Wasdin's difficult childhood and the challenges he faced on his journey to become an elite Navy SEAL sniper.

The Greitens memoir, *The Heart and the Fist: The Education of a Humanitarian, the Making of a Navy SEAL*, was adapted for youth as *The Warrior's Heart: Becoming a Man of Compassion and Courage*. The memoirs focus on how Greitens's experiences as a SEAL shaped his view of personal and military action.

We chose to examine these two pairs of memoirs because the events surrounding the publication of these two memoirs and their youth adaptations provide a unique context for a scholarly exploration of how youth's experiences, needs, and desires are imagined in the production of YAL. Important to our understanding of this production is the likelihood that the named authors of the memoirs, Wasdin and Greitens, are accompanied by ghostwriters, editors, and literary agents who have all shaped the resulting adaptations. For example, it is plausible that Wasdin's memoir and adaptation was mostly written by Stephen Templin, the coauthor on the cover, and then processed by a team of editorial experts and ghostwriters specializing in the YAL market. In short, it is useful to keep in mind that these pairs of memoirs—like all books—were constructed and produced within a publishing industry that is driven by market and political forces (Taxel, 2002); they cannot be understood solely as the isolated perspectives of two individuals. Throughout this study, we use "Wasdin" and "Greitens" as clear references to whichever memoir is under discussion but consider these names a shorthand for the range of players involved in the production of youth adaptations. We avoid referring to Wasdin and Greitens as authors; when we refer to them as actors in the text, we imagine them as narrators/protagonists.

Methods

Stance of the Researchers

As critical scholars, we see ourselves as the primary instruments in our research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); our own social and cultural backgrounds and political stances inform our interpretations. In this study, our stances toward and experiences with the military matter. We all identify as white, middle-class, American civilians with no personal experiences of military operations. Our political stances toward the military, armed conflict, and the larger military industrial complex are tempered by family members on active duty, images of human atrocities that appear to both stem from and justify military action, and the belief that any cultural norms related to warfare are too complex to warrant blanket positions. We, therefore, approached our coding and analysis with an awareness of our lack of direct knowledge of military action, as well as a commitment to studying textual depictions of military action as complex human experience.

Critical Comparative Content Analysis

To guide our inquiry, we developed a framework referred to as Critical Comparative Content Analysis (CCCA). While critical content analysis names ways in which constructs such as gender, race, coming-of-age, sexuality, and immigrant youth, among others are represented in texts (see, e.g., Johnson, Mathis, & Short, 2017), the *comparative* piece of CCCA begins with the premise that these constructs are represented differently to different audiences. CCCA analyzes what those differences are and how those differences emerge across specific audiences. In this study, we use the imagined or "implied" reader/audience (Iser, 1978; Prince, 1982; Thein & Sulzer, 2015)—the group of readers presumed to be interested and engaged with the ideas being communicated in the text—as a principal lever of critical analysis. Although we use the terms "reader" and "audience" somewhat interchangeably, we tend to use "audience" in reference to the larger implications of the text for a given audience and "reader" in reference to specific textual features that might shape interpretive possibilities for members of that audience. The differences between texts when the presumed audience/reader changes are the basis of comparison in CCCA.

Our method of CCCA is grounded in qualitative content analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). Guided by qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012), we produced coding frames to reduce our data via systematic collections of particulars from the texts aligned with our research questions. We also took up Krippendorff's (2013) emphasis on context, defined as "a conceptual environment of a text…the analyst's best hypothesis for how the texts came to be, what they mean, what they can tell or do" (p. 38), as we described (above) the ways in which constructs such as race and gender historically and presently interact with cultural understandings of adolescence—and what that might mean regarding the rise of youth adaptations in the YAL market. Lastly, we used CDA (e.g., Fairclough, 2014) to pinpoint surface level features within texts (e.g., second person *you*, chapter titles, rhetorical questions) that reveal ideological layers with respect to how youth audiences are imagined and addressed on the page.

Throughout the process, we applied coding and categorizing procedures to our coding frames, going through recursive rounds of descriptive coding to collaboratively produce categories (Saldaña, 2013). Our CCCA process involved a four-step, recursive progression (described below): (a) preparation, (b) creation of coding frames, (c) coding the data, and (d) establishing interpretations. In each stage of our CCCA process, we worked together as a research team to build consensus as we developed coding frames, codes, and interpretations.

Preparation stage. During the preparation stage, we read each memoir front to back, then recorded and discussed our general impressions/questions and determined the style of each adaptation.

Wasdin set: Adaptation style. The Wasdin adaptation maintains the chronology of the original. However, many episodes from Wasdin's life are significantly abbreviated, others are left out altogether, and a few paragraphs of new material are added. The chapter titles remain the same, although one chapter from the original was omitted in the youth adaptation. The overall adaptation style might be characterized as large and chunky, as if the original text were a pile of boulders and adapting the text for a youth audience involved chipping away at some boulders, removing others, and in a few rare but important instances, adding a boulder that wasn't there originally.

Greitens set: Adaptation style. The Greitens adaptation has a different thematic vision than its

general market counterpart. Geographically named chapters in the original, such as "Iraq," "China," and "Bosnia," stand in stark contrast to motif-oriented chapter titles in the youth adaptation, such as "Adventure Awaits," "Getting It Right," and "A Lesson in Respect." These chapter names signal a much more comprehensive revision, whereby most sentences were revised at some level (e.g., word substitute, word omission, phrase relocation). Thus, the overall adaptation style might be characterized as similar to a remake of a film. While much of the script is the same, many lines are changed to varying degrees, some parts of the story appear in a different order, and significant moments in the story imply a different interpretive quality.

Creation of coding frames. Creating coding frames involved purposefully and systematically abstracting words, phrases, or larger excerpts from each text set. This process was guided by our initial readings during the preparation stage. Because texts are inherently idiosyncratic, requiring individual considerations with respect to analysis (Krippendorf, 2013; Scheier, 2012), we produced distinct strategies for building coding frames for each set of memoirs.

Wasdin set: Coding frame and coding process. The Wasdin adaptation was produced by adding, revising, or omitting content, all the while maintaining the chronology of the original memoir. Our strategy for creating a coding frame therefore aimed to document *additions, omissions*, and r*evisions* in the youth adaptation. We placed the texts side-by-side and juxtaposed the content of the original with that of the adaptation. We placed sticky notes wherever the texts differed, referring to these differences as "points of contrast." We collected these points of contrast in a chart, documenting the page number(s) on which the content appeared in both versions, the length of the content in both versions (e.g., two sentences or three paragraphs), and a description of the content variation using a mixture of direct quotes and paraphrasing. This coding frame allowed us to revisit passages in both texts in order to closely align our interpretations with the source texts and to look across points of contrast in order to interpret the adaptation as a whole.

Our coding process initially yielded 19 codes. Some of these included "outsmarting authority," "alcohol use," and "pleasure in war/violence." We then collapsed our codes to produce an axial code, which we called *Complex Man vs. Prototypical Military Hero* (see Table 1).

Greitens set: Coding frames and coding process. We developed two coding frames to respond to the more comprehensive nature of the Greitens adaptation. The first one we call "anchor images." It involved identifying passages that appear in both novels (e.g., a boy reading by flashlight) and characterizing the material leading up to and away from the image. Anchor images illuminated how similar passages in the two memoirs tended to establish different fields of interpretation.

The second approach we call "narrative frames." The Greitens memoir is organized in short episodes separated by chapter and section breaks. We systematically analyzed those breaks, documenting how each episode was introduced and concluded. We defined a narrative frame as the first and last portions of an episode. A portion was defined as a sentence-long stretch of text that introduces or concludes an episode. For example, the original memoir begins with "The first mortar round landed as the sun was rising," and the first section ends with "One month later, Lieutenant Travis Manion would be dead." When the content of the first/last portion was linked with other sentences (e.g., a particular sentence belonged to a larger stretch of dialogue, or a pronoun in a final sentence had a complex antecedent from the previous sentence), we

included up to one paragraph of neighboring material.

We compiled the coding for the narrative frames by typing the first and last portions into an Excel document. We then removed duplicate portions so that they would be coded the same across memoirs. In total, 316 portions were included in this coding frame: 164 (original) + 172 (adaptation) – 20 (duplicates) = 316.

Before our initial round of coding, we randomized the list of 316 portions. Randomizing the list freed our coding process from a strictly linear reading of each text, allowing us to focus on the work the content of the portion was doing. By putting the first/last portions of both memoirs in one master list, randomizing that list, coding the list, then putting the list back in order with respect to which codes go with which version of the memoir, we were better able to see a pattern in the distribution of codes between the memoirs and interpret

Table 1

Codes, Definitions, Categories, and Frequencies of the Wasdin text set

Descriptive Codes	Definitions	Categories and Frequencies of Codes			Totals
		Additions	*Omissions*	*Revisions*	
Morals/religion	Wasdin explains his experiences by referencing a higher power	3			**3**
Military corruption or failures	Wasdin details instances of military corruption or failures		6	3	**9**
Social class background/family history	Wasdin provides information about his social class and family history		7	9	**16**
Pleasure in war/violence	Wasdin expresses pleasure in entering into combat		4	5	**9**
"boys will be boys"/ *Animal House*-ish military culture	Wasdin portrays military culture aligning with stereotypical fraternity activities and the cliché "boys will be boys"		8		**8**
Un-"politically correct" language or ideas	Wasdin offers racially charged and misogynistic observations		7	10	**17**
Violence against animals	Wasdin describes instances of killing, mutilating, and terrorizing animals		5	1	**6**
Outsmarting authority	Wasdin describes how he and his team outsmarted ranking officers, police, and other authorities		3	1	**4**
Individualism/self-importance	Wasdin describes moments of being superior in mental and physical ability to those around him		4		**4**
SEALs having special privileges	Wasdin describes what special privileges SEALs are afforded via their social status			6	**6**
Alcohol use	Wasdin describes moments of alcohol use		7		**7**
Sex	Wasdin references sex		3	8	**11**
Profanity	Wasdin uses profanity to express an idea			3	**3**
Totals		**3**	**54**	**46**	**103**

Above is a partial list of descriptive codes. These codes were collapsed into the axial code, *Prototypical Military Hero vs. Complex Soldier*, described in the findings section.

tendencies in the way episodes were framed for adult versus youth audiences.

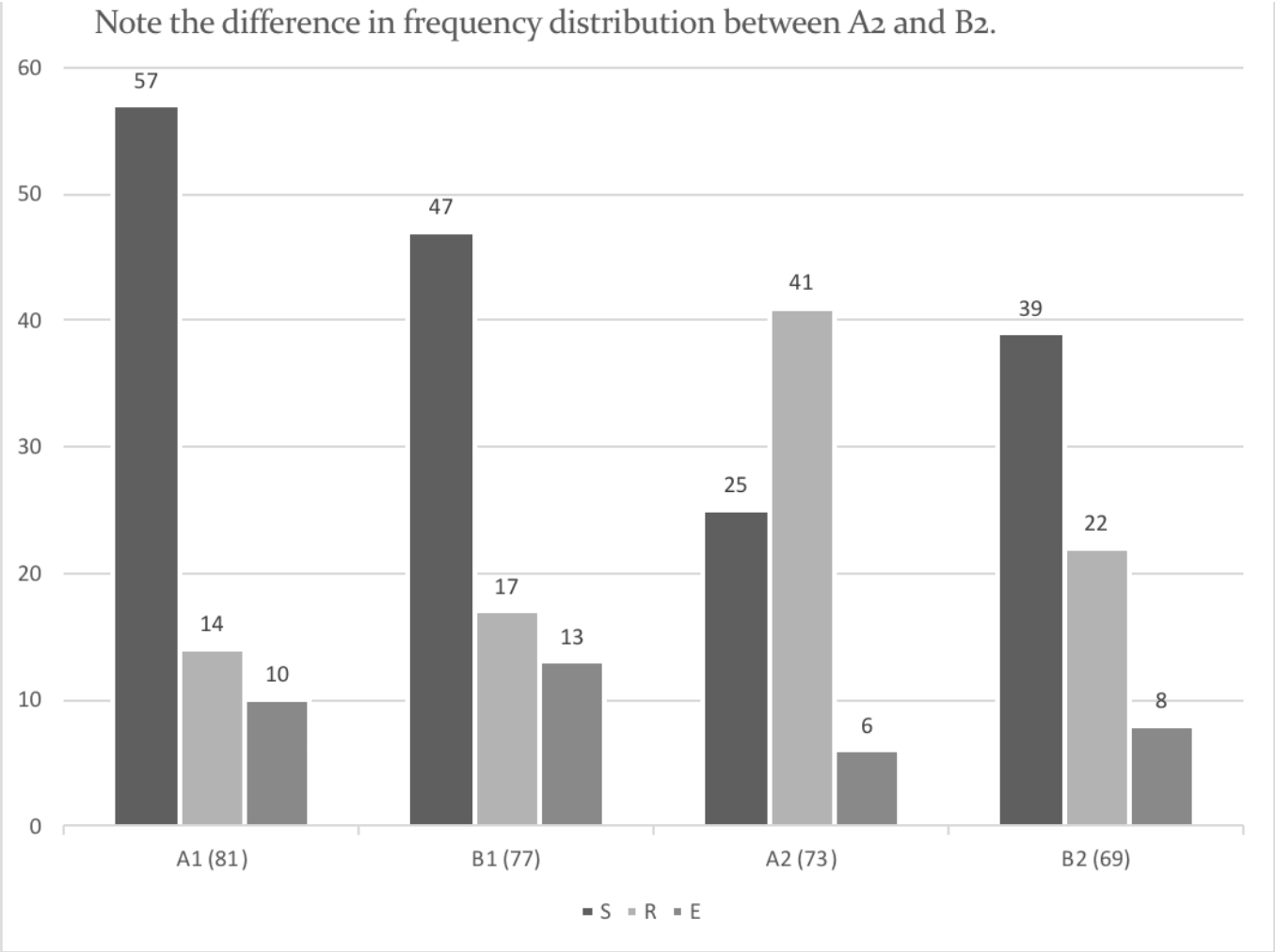
Our initial coding yielded 40+ codes. Some examples included "revealing a lesson learned," "using an idiomatic expression," and "working hard." We worked with these initial codes in two ways. First, we collapsed the initial codes into three overarching categories: Reflection, Scene, and Explanation (see Table 2). Second, we read and reread our initial codes, recursively grouping similar codes together to produce 14 codes that offer more fine-grained descriptions of textual content (see Table 3). Observing the tendencies of the memoirs with respect to the overarching categories and descriptive codes was the basis of analysis for narrative frames.

Findings

In this section, we present findings from the Wasdin memoirs followed by the Greitens memoirs. In the discussion and implications section, we draw connections between our findings from each pair of memoirs, leading us to implications for research and practice.

Table 2

Frequency of Overarching Coding Categories in First and Last Portions of the Greitens Text



The Wasdin Set: Omissions, Revisions, and Additions

We categorized the Wasdin adaptation according to three techniques: *omissions*, *revisions*, and *additions*. *Omissions* involved complete removals of certain passages. Consider, for example, the following

omission in the youth adaptation:

> "[Military training] isn't hard," I said. "You've got women here making it through the training." I felt like we could have done their two weeks of "intensive training" in two days (p. 89).

Omissions tended to scrub Wasdin's views of women, episodes of gratuitous violence against animals, and moments when Wasdin appears callous toward taking human life. The youth adaptation of Wasdin's memoir has 65 such straight omissions ranging from 1-2 sentences to 23 full paragraphs, driving the original memoir's 315 pages down to the adaptation's 165 pages. Although some may assume that youth adaptations need a reduction in pages for market viability, the counterintuitive nature of the YAL market, with the success of the 4,000+ page *Harry Potter* series, among others, complicates that assumption (Cart, 2010). Our inquiry, therefore, focuses on how omissions construct a youth adapted version of Wasdin.

Table 3

Codes, Abbreviations, Definitions, and Examples for the Greitens Text

Abbreviation: Code	Definition	Example
Q: Quotation	Quotes a person or book	Han Lin and I were driven to the police station in the back seat of a police car, accompanied by another man from the dormitory, who whispered to me, "They can't do anything to us. China is different now."
SEW: Someone Else's Worldview	Describes another person's worldview	Earl's life had taught him hard lessons, and his focus on virtue admitted no exceptions: if you did not wash the strings on your boxing gloves, you were—so went the logic train—an unworthy man.
FI: Factual Information	Relates factual information	That night Earl called me.
IR: In Retrospect	Reflects on state of knowledge at a previous time	I had no idea that at that moment an Iraqi man was planning his own suicide, and that he'd be coming to find us before we woke.
LL: Lesson Learned	Describes a lesson learned through experience	Even before college, other lessons came my way. One of the most important was that to be great or really do good in the world, I needed to understand the world beyond myself.
CL: Clichéd language	Uses a cliché to punctuate the main idea of the episode	He taught me the importance of getting it right.
AE: Author Evaluation	Offers an evaluation of a state of affairs	This was 1993, and China seemed much more foreign then than it does now.
RQ: Rhetorical Question	Asks a rhetorical question	Would somebody be issued these fins in a few weeks and have to put a line through my name?
SIMS: Statement Indicating a Mental State	Indicates how he may have felt during a particular time.	Goosebumps rose as my flashlight brightened the words in front of me.
DSIMS: Direct Statement Indicating a Mental State	Directly states how he felt during a particular time.	The next few days did nothing for my confidence in the decision.
PR: Personal Realization	Relates a moment of realization and/or personal meaning	Sitting in Gasinci, I understood the anger of the woman who had approached me on the train: "Why don't you *do* anything?"
RA: Rationale for Action	Supports an action with a rationale	I wanted to make more of my time in China, so later in the summer I went back to Beijing.
SP: Second Person	Uses second person point of view	It's not that death is new for you. You've traveled to other places and seen famine, disease, and violence.
FD: Framing a Decision	Frames a decision for the reader in second person	*Just a few names, that's all. Then you can get out of this oppressive room. Then you can go back to your dormitory, enjoy your last few days in China, and head back to the safety of home. What do you do?*

An adapted version of Wasdin also emerges from *revisions*, which we defined as passages that had been reworked to establish a different emphasis. Take as a representative example the following excerpt that connects Wasdin's tough childhood to his military success. The sections in strike-through text were revised out of the youth adaptation.

> Terror covered the faces of many guys. Their eyes looked like two fried eggs. Only minutes into it, the bell started ringing—people quit. *You can't be serious. What the hell's wrong?* ~~*Yeah, instructors are running around shooting off machine guns and everything, but no one has smacked me in the face or beat me with a belt yet.* I couldn't comprehend why people were quitting already.~~ Of course, my tough childhood had prepared me for this moment. More than physically, I knew that mentally I had mastered pain and hard work, and I knew I could master more. My father's expectations for high performance from me produced my own expectations for high performance. In my mind, I strongly believed I wouldn't quit. (Original version, p. 68; youth adaptation, p. 27; italics in both versions)

In both versions, Wasdin's tough childhood is credited for preparing him for military training. However, the original version includes specific imagery, i.e., "smacked me in the face or beat me with a belt," and the agent of the smacking and beating, i.e., "father." A tough childhood, in this version, is accompanied by images of violence and relationships shaped by violence; it is presented as a visceral, embodied experience, hinting at complex questions about the role family abuse and physical/mental trauma in Wasdin's life. By contrast, the youth adaptation presents Wasdin's tough childhood as an internal, protective charm that enabled his military success.

Lastly, the youth adaptation contains a few rare additions—three total. Each of these additions appeals to religion and moral conduct. One addition extends Wasdin's reflection about the influential role of Brother Ron, his childhood pastor. In another passage, Wasdin reflects on "the path God intended for me" in Somalia (p. 164). Finally, a carefully placed paragraph on the mental/spiritual life of a sniper precedes a tense moment when Wasdin takes aim at an elderly man suspected of carrying mortars in a Somali street. Before Wasdin takes the shot, the additional material in the adaptation prepares the reader:

> A sniper must be mentally strong, firmly anchored in a religion or philosophy that allows him to refrain from killing when unnecessary, and to kill when necessary…It's possible to begin to sympathize with the target. The target probably has done nothing to directly hurt the sniper. Yet, when the time comes, the sniper must be able to complete the mission. (p. 98)

Compared to the original, these additions signal a far more even-tempered person grounded in faith in a higher power. Combined with the omitted and revised content, a youth-adapted Wasdin emerges, someone separate from the general market counterpart—a military hero as opposed to, in the original version, a complex person full of his own biases and worldviews. We further explore this idea in the following section via two subthemes: (a) Link Violence with Justice, Delink Violence from Pleasure; and (b) Groom Out Problematic Social/Cultural Attitudes.

Link violence with justice, delink violence from pleasure. One way that the depiction of Wasdin is sanitized in the youth adaptation is in representations of Wasdin's experiences with and

stances toward violence. Throughout the original version, Wasdin is depicted as someone who has experienced and perpetrated violence in many forms. Violence is depicted as pleasurable and exciting for Wasdin, a depiction absent in the adaptation.

Wasdin's experiences with violence begin in his childhood. While the original version includes references to his abuse at the hands of his father and his own bullying of other children, these experiences are largely omitted from the youth adaptation. For instance, the original memoir includes a story of Wasdin orchestrating a violent BB gun attack on another child. This story is omitted entirely in the adaptation. In another example, both versions include a story of Wasdin assaulting another child who he believed had hurt his sister. However, the story is abridged from 23 paragraphs in the original memoir to one sentence in the adaptation. Below is an excerpt of the story from the original and the full (sentence-length) story from the adaptation.

> *Original:* "I went through the roof. Now I was a bull seeing red [...] I nailed him right in the face, plowing him. I got on top of the boy, straddled his upper body, and pummeled him half to death, cussing up a storm [...] Dad walked into the house and grabbed his shotgun [...] In spite of Dad's faults, protecting his family was important to him" (pp. 34-36).
>
> *Adaptation:* "I once got in a fight with another kid right in front of his church, starting a feud between our families that lasted weeks and nearly turned to shooting before Brother Ron got everyone to make peace" (p. 12).

The original story illustrates Wasdin's admiration for his father's family loyalty. Here and elsewhere in the original memoir, loyalty and violence are juxtaposed, leaving readers to interpret and question the balance. By contrast, the adapted episode is an appeal to the character of Brother Ron, who is a stable force of reason and de-escalation. Also notable is that without the details of the story depicted in the original version of the memoir, the sentence-length version offered in the adaptation reads as hyperbole; taken out of context, the idea of a "feud" "nearly leading to shooting" sounds more like rhetorical flourish than reality.

Depictions of the violence Wasdin experienced during his time in the military are also sanitized in the adaptation. While the original version includes incidents where Wasdin seems to delight in violence and killing, the adaptation is divested of nearly all such incidents. Take, for example, the following excerpt from the original in which Wasdin seems to delight in his team's killing a number of enemy combatants in an ambush: "...they killed some of our guys and wounded more, but we had pulled out a can of whoop-ass on them. Corpses lay everywhere. Now the enemy ambushed us a second time – dumb bastards. They paid a hell of a price" (p. 251). In other instances, seemingly slight revisions serve to delink pleasure from the violence of war. In the following example, Wasdin describes the value of having a .50 caliber weapon on a Humvee:

> *Original:* "The .50 helped us with the violence of action. Its barrel glowed from the steady stream of bullets pouring out, chewing through concrete, metal, flesh – it literally knocked out walls. *Yeah, this .50 is kicking ass.*" (p. 246)
>
> *Adaptation:* "The .50 could chew through concrete, metal, flesh – it literally knocked out walls. Unfortunately, the enemy had .50s, too..." (p. 137)

The original version includes a reverence and glorification of the .50 caliber, focusing on the aesthetics of the glowing barrel with a "stream of bullets pouring out" and implying excitement with the "ass-kicking" of the weapon. The adaptation takes a more dispassionate view of the .50 caliber, explaining that it is powerful, but not suggesting that the capacities of this weapon are somehow aesthetically appealing or exhilarating.

The pleasure that Wasdin seems to find in violence is also constrained in the youth adaptation through the omission of the multiple instances referencing Wasdin's torture of and violence toward animals. These instances include a description of Wasdin and friends trapping a "malnourished, mangy" cat in a suitcase and leaving it by the side of a road; Wasdin baiting, trapping, and stomping on rats to fill time while on watch; and Wasdin and his team training with Australian snipers by using kangaroos as target practice.

Grooming out problematic social and cultural attitudes. In addition to delinking pleasure and violence, the adaptation omits/revises instances in which Wasdin expresses social attitudes that contrast with a view of a prototypical military hero with a clear moral compass, self-control, and respect for others. In the original, Wasdin and his teammates participate in what we refer to as "boys will be boys" military culture—a culture of misogyny, drinking, and pranks. For example, omitted is an episode in which Wasdin and his team ambush a group of "rednecks," assault them, strip off their clothes, and throw their car keys in the bushes. Also omitted is a story of Wasdin and his team engaging in a brawl with Tunisian men in a strip club. In this episode, police are called, but Wasdin's team resists, with one team member going so far as to bite "a plug" out of a police dog.

Similar revisions serve to sanitize Wasdin's social and cultural attitudes. While the original version includes examples of Wasdin's derogatory attitudes toward women and people of color, the youth adaptation is subtly revised to avoid revealing these attitudes. In one revision, Wasdin describes a training exercise that went awry when one team member couldn't swim.

> *Original:* "We lost a muscular black guy because his body was so dense that he just sank like a rock to the bottom of the pool" (p. 65).
>
> *Adaptation:* "We lost a muscular guy who just sank like a rock to the bottom of the pool" (p. 26).

The adaptation removes Wasdin's observation that perhaps skin color accounts for body density, precluding the possibility that Wasdin might be evoking the strange biological myth that Black people are less buoyant than white people. However, the adapted Wasdin is not someone to intimate race is related to body density. In this way, youth readers are not granted the opportunity to wonder about the role of race in Wasdin's worldview.

Similarly revised is Wasdin's first impression of his ex-wife Laura.

> *Original:* "I asked her friend Laura to the prom – our first date. Laura had a nice body and big breasts. After prom, in the car, we kissed for the first time. Well, she kissed me and I didn't resist. Because I grew up in a family that didn't show affection, her interest in me meant a lot" (p. 38).
>
> *Adaptation:* "I asked her friend Laura to the prom – our first date. Because I grew up in a family that didn't show affection, her interest in me meant a lot" (p. 13).

In the original, Wasdin explains that he was initially drawn to Laura for her body and her sexual assertiveness. The adaptation leaves out those details. These omitted details, as well as many others throughout the adaptation, work to present Wasdin within a different template of masculinity(ies). Wasdin's youth adapted masculinity maintains an aura of physical prowess and bravado that is systematically disassociated from misogyny.

In the adaptation, omissions of Wasdin's observations/experiences are conditioned by the implied youth reader, who throughout the adaptation never encounters Wasdin's use of profanity, his attitudes about women, his passing references to race (of, for example, an "overweight black woman" or a "muscular black guy"), his hotheadedness, and so on. Moments in the text that would complicate Wasdin's status as anything other than an elite SEAL sniper aligning with culturally praised archetypes are groomed out.

"The CYOA genre is distinctive for its use of the second person *you* that positions the reader as the protagonist of the story."

In stripping out or significantly revising representations of Wasdin and his experiences, the youth adaptation depicts him as a prototypical military hero who is able to kill effectively for his country, but only when necessary. By contrast, the original version illustrates how, for Wasdin, the ability to kill comes along with other forms of cruelty and violence that bleed over into his life beyond the battlefield.

The Greitens Set: Humanitarian Militarism v. Choose Your Own Adventure

The primary contrast between the original and youth adaptation of the Greitens texts is thematic. The original memoir develops the theme of humanitarian militarism, arguing that "the strong" should protect the world's "weakest" populations, that care should be guaranteed for military veterans afflicted with physical and psychological trauma, and that wisdom should be sought in the dynamic relationship between experience and action – a relationship defined as "the ability to figure out what to do, while at the same time knowing what is worth doing" (original, p. 283). Throughout the original, these ideas emerge through stories from Greitens's youth, his college years, his travels abroad as a photographer, and his military service as a SEAL. This version details many of the circumstances through which Greitens's perspective has been shaped, noting that military action inherently involves contradictions. Greitens states:

> The world, I believe, is not constructed so that it presents us with perfect choices. I'd joined the military, in part, because I saw that to protect the innocent, we have to be willing to fight. It is also true, however, that for all the warrior's discipline, when we pick up the sword, innocents will suffer. (p. 283)

Thematically, the memoir emphasizes the morally gray calculations that define a world without perfect choices.

However, the youth adaptation shifts the thematic emphasis away from humanitarian militarism and the imperfect choices involved therein. Instead, this version embraces a Choose Your Own Adventure (CYOA) theme.

The CYOA genre is distinctive for its use of the second person *you* that positions the reader as the protagonist of the story. Throughout the story, the

reader is asked to make decisions about what *you* will do and directed to a corresponding page to continue the story ("History of CYOA"). CYOA is thematic and rhetorical in the adaptation rather than organizational, however; at no point can readers actually make decisions that lead them to different page numbers.

Periodic chapters written entirely in second person, culminating in the question "What do you do?" reinforce the CYOA theme. Chapter titles include "You: Fighting Back," "You: Leading in Danger," and "You: Surviving Hell." Each of these CYOA chapters acts as a prelude to subsequent material. For example, "You: Surviving Hell" positions the reader in one of Greitens's experiences from Hell Week (an intensive week of training for Navy SEALs):

> *You stand in freezing water up to your chest. Every muscle in your body throbs with pain. You are exhausted beyond anything you could ever imagine, and all around you the night air carries the curses and groans of other men who are gutting it out like you, who are trying to survive the night.* (p. 186, italics in original)

"What do you do?" always marks the chapter's end, followed by material that fleshes out what Greitens himself did at those junctures. Throughout, the reader is encouraged to make "right" rather than "wrong" choices. In contrast to the original version's more nuanced passages describing humanitarian militarism, the reader of the adaptation is folded into a world of simple binary oppositions (courage v. fear, boldness v. timidity, and conviction v. overthinking).

To explore further how the original Greitens memoir differed from the youth adaptation, we turn to our two distinct coding frames: anchor images and narrative frames.

Anchor image: Beware-and-warning. We define an anchor image as a visually thick description that appears in (or is "anchored in") both versions of the memoir. While each individual anchor image appears in both versions, they appear at a different place chronologically. Anchor images allowed us to understand how a similar textual passage could undergo a thematic rebranding in the youth adaptation. We provide an in-depth interpretation of what we call the Beware-and-Warning anchor image:

> Beware and Warning! This book is different from other books. You and YOU ALONE are in charge of what happens in this story…You are a deep-sea explorer searching for the famed lost city of Atlantis. This is your most challenging and dangerous mission. Fear and excitement are now your companions. (original, p. 12; adaptation, p. 4)

In both versions of the memoir, this quote serves to conjure up an image of Greitens's young self, reading a CYOA novel by flashlight. The two versions, however, position the Beware-and-Warning quote differently.

In the original memoir, we encounter the quote following a chapter—"Iraq" —describing Greitens's experience of a suicide truck bombing. The episode unfolds in violent chaos, in-the-moment thinking, a gunfight, and memories of combat training. Enemy fire ensues, and in the end, a fellow soldier, Travis, is lost. The chapter concludes with Greitens and another surviving soldier driving away, reflecting on the loss of Travis. In this version, when the reader encounters the Beware-and-Warning passage, they have been given images of war as horrific, confusing, and emotionally complex. The juxtaposition of Greitens's childhood reflections on the excitement of adventure and the violence and chaos of the

attack depicted in the previous chapter serve, thematically, to put the realities of war into sharp relief.

In the youth adaptation, the "Iraq" chapter does not precede the Beware-and-Warning passage. Instead, it follows a chapter in which the reader is introduced to Navy SEAL training. The chapter begins, "*You stand in freezing water up to your chest. Every muscle in your body throbs with pain*" (p. 1). Throughout this training exercise called "surf torture," Greitens explains the easiness of quitting, the dryness and warmth of the tent, and the food you could eat if you'd only ring the bell. The chapter culminates in a decision: "*All you have to do is get up, get out. Ring the bell.* What do you do?" (p. 3). The reader is positioned as a decision-maker who has the choice between quitting and persevering; the Beware-and-Warning image serves to thematically extend the idea that *you* are in control of where *your* story goes.

In both versions, the Beware-and-Warning passage showcases Greitens's reflections on his childhood, his motivations, and how he came to be a Navy SEAL. The details of Greitens's reflection shift, however, positioning Greitens differently with respect to the reader. In the original, the depiction of young Greitens reading CYOA novels by flashlight offers the reader insight about how a kid from Missouri would later end up in a firefight in Fallujah. In the youth adaptation, however, the emphasis shifts from Greitens as a CYOA reader to what CYOA stories involve—decisions allowing the reader to shape the story's outcomes. Throughout the adaptation, a parallel is drawn from CYOA decisions to one's life decisions more broadly; decisions are presented as thrilling and scary, but ultimately safe, with the option "to redo any bad decisions that led to my untimely demise" (p. 5). This rendering of the concept *decisions* recurs throughout the youth adaptation, establishing the idea that decisions reveal character. Good character belongs to those with conviction who decide to be great. Absent from this rendering is the idea, much more present in the original version, that decisions are contextual, imperfect, and often have irreversible consequences.

Also notable is the switch from first person in the original version to second person in the youth adaptation. Compare "in which I could create my own story" (original) with "the ones that pulled you into a vivid world and then asked *you* to decide which path to take" (adaptation). First person focuses the reader's attention on Greitens and his point of view; second person serves to position Greitens and the readers collectively. First person strikes a reflective tone, and second person strikes a tone of excitement, as if decisions are waiting to be seized – if the youth reader is brave enough.

Additionally, the Beware-and-Warning passage appears in chapters with different names, "China" in the original version and "Adventure Awaits" in the adaptation. In the original, "China" follows suit with the first chapter, "Iraq." The naming convention of using the geographical location continues with most of the other chapters, detailing Greitens's experiences from various locations. The chapters offer images of Greitens's life – some of them overlapping and reinforcing one another, some of them contradicting and creating tension. In the youth adaptation, "Adventure Awaits" signals the CYOA theme of the memoir. An exciting world is out there; you simply have to decide to put yourself into it. Chapters such as "You: Fighting Back," "You: Taking Responsibility," and "You: Leading in Danger" encourage the reader to understand decisions as binary, e.g., quitting or persevering, winning or losing, being brave or being weak. Implicit in all of these binaries is the question, *Do you have what it takes?*

Narrative frames: First/last portions. Looking across the Greitens texts with our narrative frame approach, we found the youth adaptation tends to micro-manage meaning-making through a marked increase in content that overtly conveys what "message" should be taken from the text.

Using the categories derived from our coding process, we found the original and youth adaptation tended to proceed with similar context with one key difference specific to the closing portions of episodes in the youth adaption (represented as A2; see Table 2). Rather than closing the episode by describing a scene (S), the youth adaptation tends to close each episode with a reflection (R). For instance:

> I still wanted to help those who'd been hurt and oppressed. But I also wanted to go beyond that, to become not just a help to people after they'd been hurt, but part of a force that could offer strong protection in the first place. (p. 75)

In the adaptation, reflective closing portions distill complex experiences into easily consumable takeaways. Rather than allowing readers to generate their own takeaways (an allowance much more prevalent in the original version), the youth adaptation overtly guides the meaning-making process. The prevalence of reflective material in the youth adaptation suggests that the youth reader needs a specific "message." Youth readers are meant to understand that, for example, "you never quit" and one must "go beyond." These statements are, of course, all fair game for the greater marketplace of ideas, but the propensity for the youth adaption to didactically forward these messages, while the original text does not, reveals a dominant developmental discourse suggesting both that all youth are in need of particular lessons in character (Smagorinsky & Taxel, 2004) and that youth audiences cannot be trusted to construct their own meaningful interpretations (Sarigianides, 2012).

We draw out more nuance in this tendency by looking across our 14 descriptive codes. The codes along with their definitions and examples can be found in Table 3. The codes call forth qualities of the content ranging from statements put forth as factual ("That night Earl called me") to statements directly indicating a mental state ("The next few days did nothing for my confidence in the decision"). Depending on the code, discrepancies between the versions were more or less pronounced. We've arranged the codes in a chart from least to most frequency difference (See Table 4). On the lowest frequency (left) side are content qualities used more or less equally in both versions, such as using quotes to introduce an idea or providing factual information to set a scene. Around the middle of the chart emerge greater and greater frequency differences, starting with the code *lessons learned (LL)*, which is where the text overtly communicates what Greitens learned from a particular episode. The codes *clichéd language (CL)*, *narrator evaluations (NE)*, and *rhetorical questions (RQ)* establish distinct differences in Greitens's tone toward the reader. With this tone, the youth adaptation is much more likely to position the reader through simple and motivational pronouncements, such as "The world is waiting. What will you do? Go be great."

Moving to the codes on the right in Table 4, we found sizable discrepancies in codes such as *statements indicating a mental state (SIMS)*, *direct statements indicating a mental state (DSIMS)*, *personal realizations (PR)*, and *rationale for action (RA)*. The tendency for this content to emerge more in the adaptation than the original reveals how the youth reader is presumed to need more explicit attention to what exactly Greitens was thinking and feeling at multiple junctures in the memoir. As the adaptation obliges this presumed need, the content

more clearly articulates what interests youth readers should have and what meanings they should make.

The codes on the far right of Table 4, *second person (SP)* and *framing a decision (FD)*, are exclusive to the youth adaptation. These codes reiterate the thematic emphasis in the adaptation involving CYOA. The emphasis is on what second-person-*you* will do when confronted with a decision (presented as a binary). Overall, the tendency throughout the adaptation is to guide youth readers to didactic messages about how life ought to be lived. Both versions of the memoir report on different moments in Greitens's life; however, it is primarily in the youth adaptation that these moments are processed *for* the reader, *to* the reader.

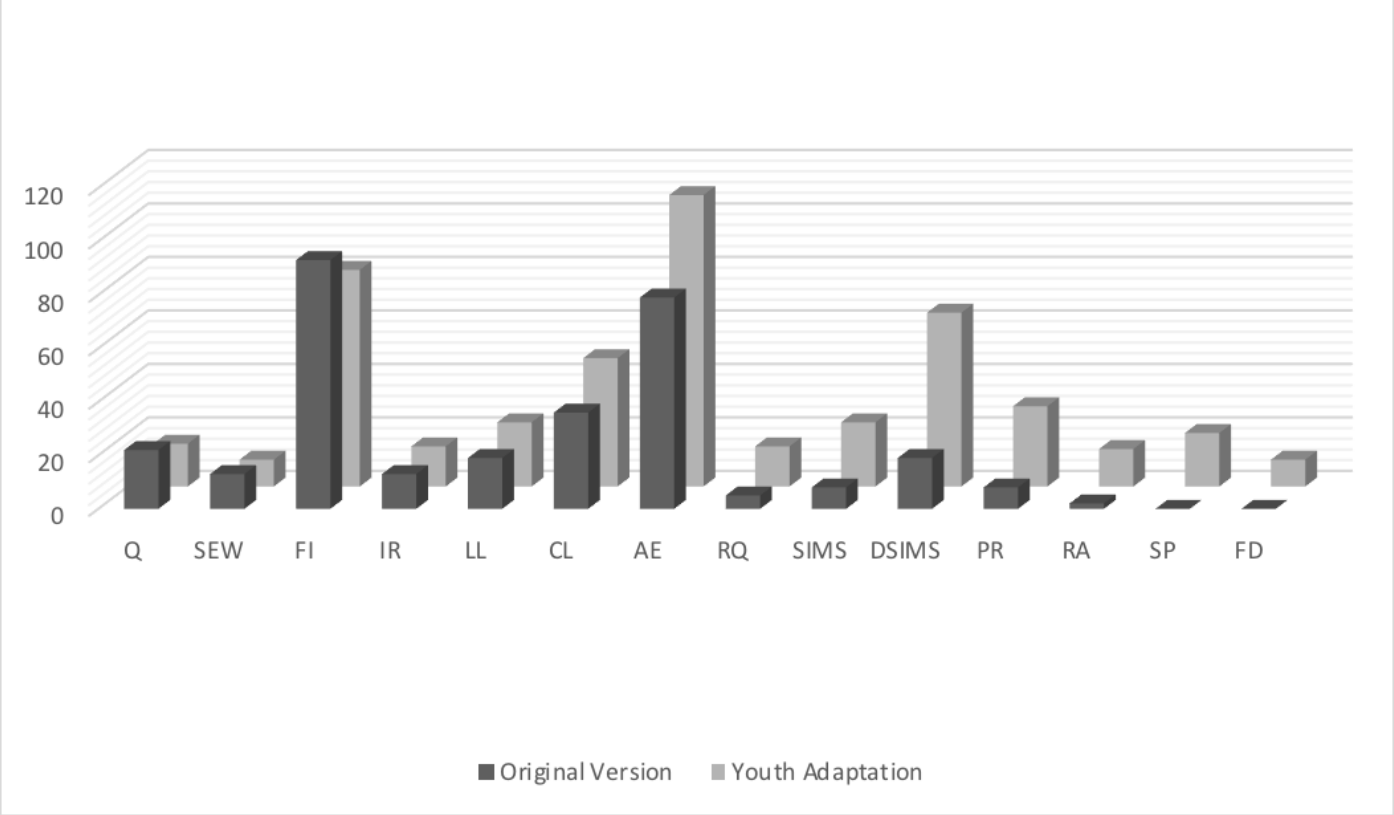
Discussion

As we introduce critiques of youth adaptations at conferences and within our classes on YAL, we are often confronted with the question, *Doesn't an adaptation simply make the language on the page more accessible to younger readers?* Our analysis of the Wasdin and Greitens memoirs leads us to a definitive *no*. Our study revealed that although part of the work of these adaptations was to massage the language of the text, the larger project was to make strategic, qualitative changes that forward particular messages deemed necessary and appropriate for a youth audience.

Wasdin and Greitens are presented to youth

Table 4

Original and Adaptation Code Frequencies of the Greitens Text.



audiences within culturally praised archetypes, discouraging readers from critical engagement with the complexities of military action, heroism, and humanity. Instead, youth audiences are constructed as needing particular, explicit lessons—for instance that good character development comes from individual perseverance, bravery, and responsibility, rather than difficult choices involving material, wide-ranging, and irreversible consequences. These constructions rely on cultural perceptions of youth as depraved (Smagorinky & Taxel, 2004), as passive recipients of social messages (Sarigianides, 2012), and as appropriate targets for simple life lessons (Sulzer & Thein, 2016).

For teachers, students, and literacy education generally, this study illustrates that comparison can be useful tool for interpreting texts with a sense of criticality. For example, in our study, the original Wasdin delights in violence; the adapted Wasdin takes a measured, professional, morally grounded stance. The original Greitens finds humanitarian militarism imperfect but worth pursuing; the youth adapted Greitens finds a world of binaries and straightforward choices. Comparing passages of original and adapted texts in this way might form the basis for inviting youth into classroom discussions about positioning and power: What stories are young people told? How are these stories told differently from the ones told to an "adult" audience? What assumptions does the text make about you as a reader?

This type of literacy engagement would have much in common with rhetorical analysis, where, for example, different appeals might be interpreted as persuasive for a particular audience. Likewise, taking up comparison as a mode of interpretation potentially establishes a framework for students to consider how texts are oriented toward certain audiences, how texts transform as the imagined audience changes, and what assumptions go into such orientations and transformations.

For a specific example of how comparisons could form the basis for a critical literacy engagement, consider the following classroom activity. The activity begins with students composing found poems based on an original memoir and its youth adapted counterpart. A found poem involves taking one or more pages of prose and circling certain words and phrases that the reader finds meaningful. These words and phrases are then arranged as a poem. The idea of the activity is to create a found poem for each version of the memoir, and then, by comparing the found poems in terms of, for example, tone, themes, and symbols, the class would have a basis for discussing the potential meanings and feelings suggested by the language. Open-ended questions guiding the discussion might include: How does the language feel different from one poem to the next? What images do you see with each poem? What differences in meaning do you sense? Why do you think these differences emerge between an original memoir and the youth adaptation of that memoir?

As a series of steps, the activity might look like this:

1. Copy the first page of an original memoir; copy the first page of its youth adapted counterpart.
2. Read each page as a whole class, in partners, or in small groups.
3. Have students circle words and phrases on each page that seem meaningful.
4. Have students assemble these words and phrases into two found poems, one for the original and one for the adaptation.
5. Compare these poems: What is each one about? How does each one feel? What images does the language evoke?

6. Have students discuss their ideas about why the tone of the language shifts from the original text to the adapted text.

Below, we offer an example of what found poems might emerge with this activity. These found poems are taken from Malala Yousafzai's original memoir, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban* (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013), and the youth adapted counterpart, *I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* (Yousafzai & McCormick, 2014). The material for the found poems was the first page of each memoir.

I Am Malala (Original)
Country created at midnight
Almost died at midday
Left home, never returned
A Taliban bullet
My heart
Torn love
Not something to wish
My eyes, long to see
My room, my clothes, my school prizes
Country five hours behind
Country centuries behind
Imagine water
Hot or cold
Lights, ovens
Food ready cooked

I Am Malala (adaptation)
My bedroom
Unmade
Rushed out
Exam
9 October 2012
School uniform
Neighborhood kids playing
Hum of the bazaar
Safina, my friend, tell me a secret
Mother in the kitchen
Brothers fighting, switching TV remote
WWE SmackDown and cartoons
Father's deep voice calls
My nickname

Implications

Findings from this study illustrate the urgency for literacy scholars and teachers to adopt a critical stance not only toward the content of YAL, but also toward the larger ideological context in which it is produced, packaged, and marketed. YAL has, after years of marginalization (Coates, 2011), made its way into secondary literacy classrooms and "come of age" (Cart, 2010), taking seriously the experiences and interests of young adults. At the same time, this study is a reminder that YAL is written *for* young people *by* adults and inescapably represents what adults—and market forces in the publishing industry—think youth audiences need, care about, and will purchase (Cadden, 2000; Nodelman & Reimer, 1995; Trites, 1998).

"Findings from this study illustrate the urgency for literacy scholars and teachers to adopt a critical stance not only toward the content of YAL, but also toward the larger ideological context in which it is produced, packaged, and marketed."

We encourage literacy scholars and teachers to engage in further inquiries that reach beyond the scope of the current study, which is situated in—and thus limited to—a United States context. Different constructions of youth audiences in YAL markets that are situated in different countries are an important dynamic left unexamined in the current study.

Our study also illustrates the value of *Critical Comparative Content Analysis* for conducting critical studies that consider how YAL production and marketing construct youth audiences. CCCA combines the *critical*—analysis of social and cultural constructs and power hierarchies—with the *comparative*—analysis of the ways in which social and cultural constructs and power hierarchies are represented differently to different audiences. While we've demonstrated several ways in which CCCA can harness the "conceptual environment of the text" (Krippendorff, 2013) through various coding frames, we can imagine many more. For instance, scholars might use the four-step recursive process we've outlined to study how award-winning literature about the youth experience marketed toward youth (e.g., Printz award winners) compares with similar literature marketed for a general audience (e.g., Alex award winners). Or, CCCA could be used to examine differences in depictions of youth experiences across various media and text genres.

Finally, for teachers, teacher educators, and researchers, this study provides a clear illustration of what Taxel (2002) refers to as the "steady encroachment of commodified culture into all aspects of children's lives" (p. 185). Commodification—i.e., the establishment of a book as a brand through the production of sequels, series, television programs, films, and "merch" (Taxel, 2011)—is a driving force of the publishing industry, and youth adapted memoirs are another example of such commodification. This study demonstrates the propensity of youth adaptations to forward particular stances, messages, and lessons based on limiting assumptions about youth readers. We recommend that teachers approach—and encourage youth to approach—YAL writ large with critical attention to how the world is portrayed on the page and how such portrayals position youth readers within the larger cultural imagination of adolescence/ts.

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Appendix A

Titles and Authors of Original and Youth Adapted Texts

Original Version	**Youth Adaptation**
The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates by Wes Moore	*Discovering Wes Moore (the Young Adult Adaptation)* by Wes Moore
Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption by Laura Hillenbrand	*Unbroken (the Young Adult Adaptation): An Olympian's Journey from Airman to Castaway to Captive* by Laura Hillenbrand
I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban by Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb	*I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Changed the World (Young Readers Edition)* by Malala Yousafzai and Patricia McCormick
Hope Solo: A Memoir of Hope by Hope Solo	*Hope Solo: My Story* by Hope Solo
The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics by Daniel James Brown	*Boys in the Boat (young readers adaptation): The True Story of an American Team's Epic Journey to Win Gold at the 1936 Olympics* by Daniel James Brown
Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina by Misty Copeland	*Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina Young Readers Edition* by Misty Copeland
Hidden figures: The American Dream and the untold story of the Black women mathematicians who helped win the space race by Margot Lee Shetterly	*Hidden Figures Young Readers' Edition* by Margot Lee Shetterly
Pay It Forward by Catherine Ryan Hyde	*Pay It Forward: Young Readers Edition* by Catherine Ryan Hyde
Shaken: Discovering Your True Identity in the Midst of Life's Storms by Tim Tebow and A. J. Gregory	*Through My Eyes: A Quarterback's Journey, Young Reader's Edition* by Tim Tebow and Nathan Whitaker
Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace – One School at a Time by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin	*Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Journey to Change the World…One Child at a Time (Young Reader's Edition)* by Sarah Thomson and Greg Mortenson