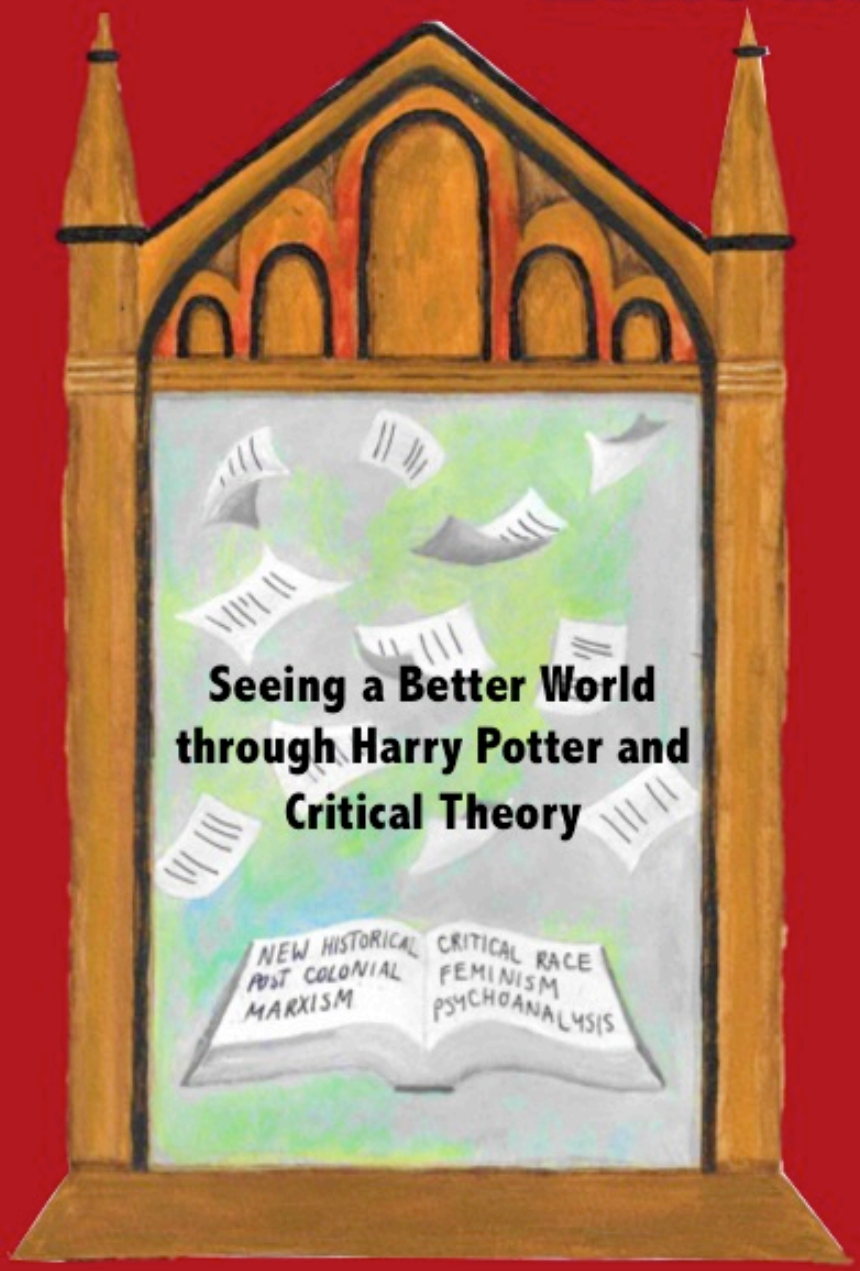
THE MIRROR OF ERISED:



THE MIRROR OF ERISED: SEEING A BETTER WORLD THROUGH *HARRY POTTER* AND CRITICAL THEORY

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Introduction

In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997), Harry Potter finds the Mirror of Erised hiding in a strange room deep in the labyrinth of Hogwarts castle. The mirror has a strange inscription on it "Erised stra ehru oyt ube cafru oyt on wohsi" (Rowling, 1997, p. 118), which when mirrored says, *I show not your face but your hearts desire*. When Harry, orphaned at a young age, looks in the mirror, he sees the deepest desire of his heart – his family. A familiar trope in the study of children's and young adult literature is the idea that literature can act as mirrors, windows, and doors (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Sciruba, 2014). Through literature, readers can see themselves reflected in the characters of a story, can get a glimpse at others and how they live, and can step into a world that is both like and unlike their own.

Continuing the metaphor, we have attempted to show what the Mirror of Erised can reflect for us; a better, more accepting, more thoughtful world. Using different critical theories as lenses through which to view the series, our undergraduate university students explored how – like Harry's glasses – these lenses shape how and what we see, and how we are able to respond to the world around us.

The essays that follow in this compilation are the culmination of a semester-long project in a first-year university class at Renaissance College, at the University of New Brunswick. Using project-based and inquiry-based learning, students in our class are encouraged to bring together learning from their other Renaissance College courses, their disciplinary knowledge from their academic minor, and their own lived

experiences. The course we teach, called Integrative Forum, uses discussion and dialogue to bring current issues into the classroom through a social justice framework, and draws on a variety of academic disciplines including sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, and literature. Students are pushed to step outside their comfort zone and engage with new material and ideas. Students gain and apply writing, analytical, civic, and discussion skills through a variety of experiential and collaborative learning opportunities. The course we teach is not specifically focused on literature, but the *Harry Potter* series was chosen as a tool to help students engage with critical frameworks and perspectives through a familiar medium.

Most of our students enter the program with a desire to make positive social change. Many of them were leaders in their high schools and volunteers in their communities. What we have found during our years of teaching Integrative Forum, is that the students enter the classroom with a desire to make positive change but with no frameworks in order to think critically about the kind of work that can be done to bring about this change. Nor have they been asked to considered how their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, and abilities may impact how they view and participate in social justice work when those they are "helping" are different than themselves. As almost entirely white and middle-upper class, our students usually initially adhere to the "white saviour" narrative so common in Western representations of the Other (Hughley, 2010); where non-white characters are "saved" or empowered by a white ally who comes to their rescue (Hughley, 2010, p. 475). Our students' desires to help the Other

and make the world a more equitable place comes from a place of good intention but because these desires are shaped by problematic and marginalizing narratives, their actions and language can easily end up contributing to further marginalization of those they are trying to help.

Well known postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak has warned that acts based in benevolence can easily perpetuate, directly or indirectly, forms of oppression. She points out that kindness and a hope for a better world does little to bring to light issues of privilege and oppression, particularly when the frameworks for understanding the "Other" come from the oppressors. Kapoor (2004), in their reading of Spivak, provides suggestions on what one can do to engage with the subaltern in an ethical way. They suggest that an individual, "retrace the history and itinerary of one's prejudices and learned habits (from racism, sexism and classism to academic elitism and ethnocentrism), stop thinking of oneself as better or fitter, and unlearn dominant systems of knowledge and representation" (Kapoor, 2004, p. 642).

During our time with our students in Integrative Forum, we try to respond to this call by helping our students uncover their own prejudices and to unlearn problematic representations. In fact, one of the first activities we do with our students encourages them to stop thinking of themselves as "special" as or "better" but instead to see how white privilege functions in society to maintain racial boundaries and capitalist class divisions: in other words, we try to help them recognize that they are not "better" they are just benefitting from a system that is already set up to see them succeed (McIntosh,

1989). We spend the entire year doing activities, readings, and projects with them to help encourage critical thinking and to provide a more nuanced and anti-oppressive approach to doing social justice work. This past year, one of those projects included a critical reading of *Harry Potter* in order to help them become familiar with critical theories and as a way of trying to get them to think critically about how dominant narratives construct our world and, in particular, how they can be problematic and enforce marginalizing norms. In other words, we forced them to re-read Harry Potter through a critical theory lens in the hopes that they could then turn this lens back on themselves. After all, if Harry Potter can be critically examined, why not the stories and narratives about their own lives?

Why not then, use a piece of nonfiction to help demonstrate some of the real-world issues we are trying to encourage our students to be critical about? Why *Harry Potter* and not a book that covers the history of the civil rights movement? The use of a fictional text in this project was a deliberate one; Kidd & Castano (2016) have documented the potential for literary fiction to increase readers' empathy, a key skill and behaviour for social justice work. As well, recently, a series of studies and media reports extolled the virtues of reading *Harry Potter* – some authors have suggested that the series has shaped the views of the Millenial generation, influencing their political values (Deets, 2009; Gierzynski, 2013) and their acceptance of out-groups (Vezzali, Stathi, Giovannini, Capozza, & Trifiletti, 2015). This project was designed to explore how the application of critical frameworks to the *Harry Potter* series changes how we read

the books and how we read the world around us. As many of the papers in this volume note, the series includes complicated reflections on politics, race, and gender. Examining these complex and interrelated phenomena through the wizarding world of *Harry Potter* encouraged our students to apply those same critical lenses to their own lives and their own worlds. As the semester progressed, our students became increasingly engaged in the critical frameworks we introduced them to and they began applying them in our discussions and in their other assignments for us and for other classes. While the topics are explored in a variety of ways in the following essays, they all use a particular critical theory framework to re-visit a narrative with which they were already familiar.

In the first essay in this volume, *Harry Potter through a New Historical and Cultural Critical Lens*, Claudia Dube, Aneira Hasson, and Eric Zundel draw fascinating parallels between the political structures of the wizarding and Muggle worlds. Examining historical and contemporary political structures and figures, their paper demonstrates how the *Harry Potter* series has been influenced by historical and cultural systems, and how the series has, in turn, shaped our cultural and historic landscapes.

Furthering a discussion of the political power demonstrated in the *Harry Potter* series, Aiden Pluta, Andrew Patten, Chloe Wiebe, and Grace Pyke argue that parallels can be drawn between the fantasy world of *Harry Potter* and colonialist policies and practices in our Muggle world. Their essay *Postcolonial Theory and* Harry Potter uses

examples from our colonialist past and present, and demonstrates how creating arbitrary divisions between peoples can create lasting political harm.

The third essay in our collection, *A Critical Marxist Analysis of* Harry Potter, also discusses the marginalization and division of people, but this time referencing Marxist theories of class conflict. Ashlyn Brownell, Lydia MacLeod, Craig Fernandez and Mick Jeffries make direct connections between a class system as discussed by Marx and the magical blood classification system used in the *Harry Potter* series. They find that the wizard uprising against Voldemort can be directly compared to a proletariat revolution; where false consciousness is broken and non-Pureblood wizards and their allies defeat Voldemort and his pure-blood oppressive regime in order to create a more egalitarian world where classes cease to exist.

Olivia Hamilton, Chloe Jardine, Grace Mangusso, and Allie Turner's essay, *The* Harry Potter *Hierarchy: Critical Race Theory and* Harry Potter, explores the hierarchical system of blood status in the *Harry Potter* series to demonstrate the social construction of oppression and marginalization. They argue that "the foundations for race-based hierarchies are as fictional as the magical world [of *Harry Potter*] itself" and show that applying Critical Race Theory (CRT) to the wizarding world can illuminate many truths about our own oppressive practices.

The Power of the Potter Patriarchy written by Austin Henderson, Madison Kenny, Cameron Lane, Duc Le, and Madison Murray also provides powerful insight about the gendered hierarchies that exist in Rowling's fictional world and our own. Examining

characters like Hermione Granger, Cho Chang, and Ginny Weasley, their paper argues that Rowling simultaneously empowers and disempowers women in her series. They also explore the ways masculinity is portrayed by characters like Ron Weasley and the eponymous Harry Potter, concluding that the insidious nature of gender inequality can have lasting effects on readers.

Finally, Sarah Dale, Erin Lawton, Chantelle Masterson, and Mallory Murphy explore a psychoanalytic reading of the *Harry Potter* series. Their essay *Psychoanalytic Theory: Harry Potter, Voldemort, and the Oedipus Complex* makes connections between Freud's theorizing around childhood development and the protagonist and antagonist of the *Harry Potter* series: Harry and Voldemort. They provide compelling evidence to suggest that the storylines of both main characters draw from Freud's Oedpius complex via their attachments to parental figures. They also discuss how these attachments are necessary in the formation of the major sources of conflict found in the novels between Harry, Voldemort, and their relationships to magic and the wizarding world. The reader is then left to ponder whether or not psychological destiny dictates our own stories and how we treat those around us in either equitable or inequitable ways.

In these essays, the authors have shown that a beloved narrative such as *Harry Potter* can hold a multitude of perspectives and can encourage thoughtful critical reflection. Through Rowling's fantastical world, in conjunction with critical theory and a social justice framework, readers can envision *Harry Potter* through a different lens.

As Dumbledore tells Harry after his encounter with the mirror of Erised, “It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live” (Rowling, 1997, p. 157). As such, it does not do to dwell merely within the pages of books. As these essays show, it is when we step outside those books and look critically, carefully, and thoughtfully at our own world that we can begin to live, to take action, and to reach for the possibilities we have come to see through the characters and events brought to us in stories. Stories are powerful tools for social justice, and this collection of essays demonstrates how a seemingly simple hero tale or school story can inspire critical reflection on our own actions. In addition, we saw the impact of this critical reflection on our own students in their motivation to work for a world that better reflects ideas of inclusion, acceptance, and equality. Instead of following a narrative they were familiar with they were pushed outside their learning comfort zones and were encouraged to see narratives they had already been taught in different ways. Our hope is that through seeing this story differently, students can also use the reflective and critical skills they have gained through this assignment to challenge dominant narratives they see in their lives; particularly those that enforce prejudices and problematic representations of Others.

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Harry Potter through a New Historical and Cultural Critical Lens

Claudia Dube, Aneira Hasson & Eric Zundel

With more than 400 million copies sold, which have been translated into 67 languages, the *Harry Potter* novels are one of the best-selling series of all time (BBC, 2008). When first released in 1997, the novels attracted the attention of readers and critics of all ages. Rowling's novels also grab the attention of literary critics, who have analyzed them through critical lenses to discover deeper meanings and important connections to certain aspects of the text. In this paper, the *Harry Potter* novels will be examined through a new historical and cultural critical lens in order to explore its connection to the culture in which it was written through connecting it to the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, the abolishment of slavery in the United States of America, and the experiences of modern politicians Tony Blair and Betsy Devos. By understanding its connections to the culture in which it was written, the influences of *Harry Potter* on our culture can be recognized.

Definition of Critical Lens

By examining *Harry Potter* through a new historicism and cultural criticism lens, literature can reveal details about the period it was written in as well as the existing belief systems. (Tyson, 2006, p. 282). Understanding these themes allows readers to better see how societal systems affect literature and can enable readers to recognize them in our own culture with a better sense of their historical context.

Literary texts shape and are shaped by their historical contexts, and in contrast to traditional historicism, do not base their understanding on anything but the basic facts of history (Tyson, 2006). New historicists focus on analyzing facts and how they fit within ideologies and conflicting social, political and cultural occurrences of that time and place. Their views from both current and past events are influenced by lived experience in both a conscious and unconscious way within their culture. New historicists question "How has the event been interpreted" and "What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?", when analyzing literature and believe that the presentation of facts is not as important as the understanding of the interpretation (Tyson, 2006).

While some critics argue that literature is wholly fictional and exists outside of its culture and time (Tyson, 2006, p. 291), when viewing it through a new historicist lens, there is a focus on the ideologies at play in the world in which it was written. These ideologies come through in the actions, design, and context of characters, as well as the effects they have on the world of their story. Understanding and recognizing these ideologies allows people to understand how they affect literature, potentially revealing how the ideologies present in today's society interact with literature and deepen our understanding of our own culture.

Most of the following analyses could be equally suited to other critical theories, such as critical race theory. This is consistent with new historicist and cultural critical literary theory. As Berger (1995) states, "Cultural critics don't just criticize out of the

blue. They always have some connection to some group or discipline" (p. 8). As we examine *Harry Potter* through a new historicist and cultural critical lens, different disciplines will be used to make connections to the world in which *Harry Potter* was written, and the world after.

Nazi influences in Harry Potter

From 1933 to 1945, over half a century before J. K. Rowling wrote the first *Harry Potter* book, the Nazis ruled Germany; their actions are so well known and devastating that they still influence literature and film today (including providing the basis for Star Wars villains (Dockterman, 2015)). Influences of Nazism can be seen in throughout *Harry Potter* in the perception of Muggle-born wizards, the creation of Lord Voldemort, as well as in the politics of the character and his followers. These connections allow us to confront the Holocaust and Nazism in a fictional setting, revealing and perpetuating the idea of Nazis as evil, and helping readers construct concepts of good and evil.

One of the clearest influences of Nazi ideology is in the structure of pure-blood, half-blood, and Muggle-born/Mudblood. Its structure is similar to the Nazi definitions for Aryan and non-Aryan people. A non-Aryan was defined in the Law on the Reconstruction of the Professional Civil Service as "anyone descended from non-Aryan, particularly Jewish, parents or grandparents. It suffices if one parent or grandparent is non-Aryan" (Friedländer & Kenan, 2009, p. 11). The definition of half-blood is similar: anyone who has non-wizard ancestors is considered half-blood. Harry's maternal

grandparents were Muggles, therefore he is considered to be half-blood despite both of his parents being wizards. Both Nazis and wizards exalted pure-bloodedness; the Nazi party believing that the "German national community drew its strength from the purity of its blood" (Friedländer & Kenan, 2009, p. 15) while the beliefs of Voldemort's followers were that pure-blooded wizards should rule, and Muggles and Muggle-born wizards should be eradicated. This constructs a binary of good and evil within the series.

Another key influence of Nazism in *Harry Potter* is Lord Voldemort himself. Lord Voldemort was a student at Hogwarts fifty years before Harry Potter and his friends. He was born to a witch and Muggle man and was raised in a Muggle orphanage (Rowling, 2014). He developed a hatred for Muggles and Muggle-borns and eventually found and killed his father, before gaining followers who shared his beliefs and idolized him, further using them to attempt to institute pure-blood rule. He shares many similarities with Adolf Hitler. Both individuals share a cult-like following, and both have a belief system that places some races below others: Jews for Hitler, and Muggle-borns for Voldemort. As Lacassagne (2016) argues, they also share similarities from Hitler's perceived parental issues; both Voldemort and Hitler had at least one dead parent and supposedly hated their fathers (p. 329). By using commonly known imagery and drawing on historical precedent, Rowling appeals to well understood tropes and constructs a frame of reference that is familiar to her readers.

Throughout the later books in the *Harry Potter* series, as Voldemort returns and grows in power, this development and the politics he uses mirrors in many ways the rise of the Nazi Party. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000/2014), Death Eaters (supporters of Voldemort) are seen torturing Muggles in public, long before policies were put in place to target Muggles or Muggle-borns (p. 108). This is similar to attacks by Nazi Party members in the early days of the Nazi rule before any major anti-Semitic policy was passed; soldiers would attack and round up Jewish people following the election of the Nazi Party (Friedländer & Kenan, 2009, p. 7).

Both would later institute policies that would oppress targeted groups. Hitler instituted policy that would force any non-Aryan civil servants to retire (Friedländer & Kenan, 2009, p.11), later forcing Jewish doctors and farmers to close as well (p. 15). Voldemort instituted a registration policy, falsely claiming, "Recent research…reveals that magic can only be passed from person to person when wizards reproduce. Where no proven wizarding ancestry exists, therefore, the so-called Muggle-born is likely to have obtained magical power by theft or force" (Rowling, 2007/2014, p. 172). These policies reduced the agency of their victims, making it increasingly difficult for them to get jobs. Examining policies like these can encourage readers to reflect on the work of their own governments and help them to see inequalities within their own societies.

Bureaucracy of both Hitler's and Voldemort's regimes stayed largely the same. Lower level members of the Ministry of Magic kept their jobs as long as they were not openly opposed to the new regime, even if they were clearly not followers of

Voldemort, such as Arthur and Percy Weasley (Lacassagne, 2016, p. 326). The same is true for members of the German civil service, who were not all members of the Nazi Party. In one instance, where a non-party member was promoted and some took issue, Hitler said that "party membership of civil servants eligible for promotion to important positions is only to be considered desirable" (Kent, 1973, p. 58).

An aspect unique to totalitarian regimes, according to Hannah Arendt, is the removal of the separation between a private and public world (quoted in Lacassagne, 2016, p. 329). That is to say, anything you say could potentially reach the ears of the government. In both regimes, a state of this appears (Lacassagne, 2016, p. 329). In Voldemort's it can be seen in Sirius Black's description:

> You don't know who his supporters are, you don't know who's working for him and who isn't; you know he can control people so that they do terrible things without being able to stop themselves. You're scared for yourself, and your family, and your friends. (Rowling, 2000, p. 444)

Rowling's description of Voldemort's regime is that of a totalitarian regime. Past governments would have influenced her description and design of this regime.

A final influence of Nazism is seen in the Snatchers, "gangs trying to earn gold by rounding up Muggle-borns and blood traitors" (Rowling, 2007/2014, p. 311). Individuals were taken to the government for a reward, though not much is known about what happened to them later (p. 311). The rounding up of the oppressed is reminiscent of the rounding up and deportation of Jewish people to the death camps.

Having established strong connections between Nazism and Voldemort's movement, the implications of that connection and Voldemort's ultimate defeat need to be examined. The presence of Nazism in *Harry Potter* allows for the discussion of the ideas of the Holocaust in a context that is less contentious and emotional. It can act as an introduction to difficult issues for children, such as racism, torture, and power dynamics. It also both reveals and perpetuates the cultural idea of Nazis as evil. A generation of children grew up with *Harry Potter* and were exposed to Voldemort and his power structure as the ultimate evil. This enforces the idea that the Nazi values and structure were detestable. New historicism also posits that fiction can inform culture (Tyson, 2006). By grounding the fantastical world of *Harry Potter* in commonly understood historical reality, Rowling creates a common frame of reference against which readers can compare their own worlds with both the wizarding world and Nazi Germany.

As illustrated by the deep similarities between the Nazi regime and the actions of Voldemort and his supporters, literature is influenced by the culture in which it was written. Being written in a culture that still holds Nazism to be one of the worst ideologies would encourage the structure of a fictional, evil organization – such as that of Lord Voldemort – to be similar. New historicism holds that texts can reveal much about the society in which they were written, and should hold for this analysis as well. That an evil organization was chosen to be totalitarian and have plans to control the democratic government speaks to the extent to which value of democracy is

cemented in western society, as well as the idea of equality among races in the hatred of Voldemort's anti-Muggle-born rhetoric.

African Americans, House-Elves, and Slavery

Rowling's depiction of house-elves and their devotion to their designated master contain an uncomfortable echo of many stereotypes held by White people about enslaved African Americans in pre-Emancipation America. When first introduced to house-elves in the second book, as Dobby arrives bowing at Harry's feet (Rowling, 1998), the first sign that something might be amiss in the wizarding world is signaled by Dobby's mismatched clothing, his bargaining over wages with Dumbledore, and his assertion of his "free will" (Horne, 2010). Once he is released from his enslavement to the Malfoy family Dobby proclaims: "Dobby is a free house-elf and he can obey anyone he likes and Dobby will do whatever Harry Potter wants him to do!" (Rowling, 2005/2014). This parallels the history of slavery in America.

House-elves willingly serve wizards as servants or slaves, accepting their subservient role in a social wizard hierarchy. Reinterpretation of slavery and the dominant power of the oppressor can be seen through the recurring prejudices towards house-elves throughout the novels. Further, the method by which house-elves can be set free - by a master giving them clothes - keeps all of the power in the hands of the oppressor, removing agency from the oppressed. Although, Harry, and through him, the reader, are invited to laugh at the ways house-elves look and behave, perhaps the depiction created of the house-elves imitates the great history of slavery in America

(Horne, 2010). Through Harry, Ron, and Hermione's reactions to the house-elves, readers can analyse their own reactions to oppression and to marginalized peoples.

From the 1830s to the 1860s, a movement to abolish slavery in America began to gain strength throughout the country. The abolition movement was created and activist groups such as Free Blacks, and other antislavery northerners, attempted to achieve the immediate emancipation of all slaves and the ending of racial segregation and discrimination (Stewart, 1991). Actions similar to this historic movement can be seen throughout the novels as Harry begins to realize that the most important way to fight discrimination and racism towards house-elves is through being kind to the elves, and treating all as equal. Although Harry begins to see that wizarding culture relies on the labour of house-elves, he remains quiet and does not challenge others who mistreat the elves or make 'elf liberation' a cause worth fighting for. This is exemplified when Professor Slughorn tells him he's tested his wine for poison by having a house-elf taste each bottle. Harry acknowledges that this action may amount to abuse , but does not speak out in the face of elfish oppression, instead remaining quiet (Horne, 2010). Harry eventually learns to fight the oppressive attitudes toward elves by recognizing that they have feelings, like humans, and learns to identify with, and have sympathy for the elves. Many of these actions can be paralleled with slavery through the resistance to the abolition movement, as feelings had been strong during the American Revolution but did not coalesce into a militant crusade until the 1830s (Stewart, 1991).

Hermione's introduction to the discrimination and oppression in the wizarding world is very different from Harry's. Rather than responding to the social inequalities on a personal level- in regards to changing her behaviour towards the elves - Hermione's awakening begins with a recognition of institutional racism and leads her to begin The Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare (S.P.E.W.) Campaign on behalf of elf-rights (Rowling, 2000/2014). Hermione's recognition of racism in the wizarding world is realized not only when she witnesses the suffering and mistreating of house-elves, but also when she recognizes that her own privilege as a student at Hogwarts was supported by the labour of others (Horne, 2010). She says: "You know, house-elves get a very raw deal […] It's slavery, that's what it is […] Why doesn't anyone do something about it?" (Rowling, 2000/2014). Hermione tries desperately to get other students to join her organization; however, few seemed mildly interested and were reluctant to take part as they thought the activist group was a joke. While Hermione may back away from her solutions to the racism she witnesses in the wizarding society in the final books, she continues to carry forward the talk on the discrimination towards house-elves.

Hermione's unsuccessful call for political action, in comparison to Harry's, can be viewed as an interpretation of the many women activists who took part in the abolition movement who often faced discrimination based on their gender. Women had no vote at the time of the Slave Trade and were often expected not to take part in the political scene, which in turn, often silenced their voice. In 1840, the World Anti-Slavery

Convention was held in London in which famous abolitionists such as, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, attended, but were not taken seriously and were refused seats at the convention solely based on their gender (Stanton, Anthony, Gage, & Harper, 1922s).

While these past events have contributed to Hermione's struggles in *Harry Potter*, her struggles, in turn, influence our culture. In recent years, women's participation in politics has increased significantly; however, they lack access to political decision making in comparison to their male counterparts in all levels of government (Kassa, 2015). Hermione's struggles to be taken seriously, while perhaps accurate, reinforces the idea that women do not have to be taken as seriously as men. However, as *Harry Potter* also influences our own culture, recent research suggests that the "*Harry Potter* generation"' is more tolerant, egalitarian politics have been shaped by the *Harry Potter* series (Gierzynski, 2013).

The way Harry fights racism, according to Horne (2010), is through personal understanding and empathy, largely ignoring the institutional oppression that Hermione unsuccessfully tries to convince him to address. The success Harry has in empathizing with elves compared to Hermione's institutional, political approach suggests to readers that the institutional method of fighting racism is ineffective and promotes the more personal approach to fighting racism. This has the potential to detract from fighting racism on an institutional level in the minds of readers. However, because readers will

empathize and identify with different characters, the series could also influence systemic change.

New historicism analyzes the way ideologies are interpreted in context to the world in which it was written; these ideologies are explained in the actions, design, and context of characters and can be directly correlated to historical context. Rowling's depiction of house-elves is a prime reflection of the oppression of enslaved African Americans and the abolition movement through the representation of the house-elf character and the political actions taken by Harry and Hermione to achieve elf liberation.

Current Politics and Harry Potter

When applying the new historical lens to *Harry Potter*, not only can we see parallels between past historical and political movements, but current ones as well.

, There are several instances where the actions and personality of Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic, are eerily close to those of former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair.

From the start, former Prime Minister Blair strongly supported the "War on Terror", and participated in the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, as well as the 2003/2014 invasion of Iraq. In a study conducted about Blair's personality and the effects it had on the Iraq War, which is often called "Tony Blair's War", Dyson (2000) comes to the conclusion that "the personality of Prime Minister Tony Blair accounts rather well for the major aspects of the British choice in Iraq" (p. 303). These personality traits include

"a high belief in his ability to control events, a low conceptual complexity, and a high need for power" (Dyson, 2000, p. 303). Despite all of this evidence, however, Blair constantly denied his involvement in the War, often shifting blame, or making excuses.

We can see a direct parallel to this behaviour in Cornelius Fudge. His personality traits mirror those of Blair's, especially in regards to a high need for power. When Harry claimed Voldemort had returned, Fudge refused to believe it, due to the fact it would mean that the world he had worked so hard to create would be destroyed (Rowling, 2003/2014). In *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, Fudge uses his influence at the Daily Prophet to launch a smear campaign against Harry and Professor Dumbledore, to discredit their claims that Voldemort had returned, not unlike Blair who tried to use his media influence to deny his involvement in the Iraq War, and discredit those who said otherwise (Rowling, 2003/2014).

What becomes more interesting still is the parallel between how the end of the rule of Blair and Fudge came to be. For Blair, as the casualties of the Iraq War mounted, Blair was accused of "misleading Parliament" (Washington Times, 2003/2014). In the 2005/2014 general elections, the Labour Party's overall majority was reduced to 66, and pressure built up for Blair to resign. On September 7th, 2006, Blair publicly stated he would step down as the party leader (BBC, 2006).

For Fudge, he realizes he was wrong, and that Voldemort has returned, in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix, when he sees Dumbledore being attacked by Voldemort in the Ministry of Magic with his own eyes. This means Fudge has to admit

to the Daily Prophet that he was wrong, stating "Lord – well you know who I mean – is alive and among us again… We believe the Dementors are currently taking direction from Lord – Thingy" (Rowling, 2003/2014, 745). The wizarding community becomes furious, and protests for his resignation. Rufus Scrimgeour then replaces him as Minister for Magic. Since JK Rowling wrote the *Harry Potter* series in Britain, it is unsurprising that the politics of the region impacted her novels.

In an even more recent comparison, one can take a look at Dolores Umbridge, senior undersecretary to the Minister for Magic and Betsy DeVos, Donald Trump's Secretary of Education. Their common narrative of increased government involvement in schools, privatization of public schools providing a more exclusive education, and constant critique of teachers are much the same. These figures share common conservative political values, and offer a counterpoint to many of the other political figures in the novels.

In Umbridge's case, in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, she is appointed as a professor at Hogwarts, in which she taught according to a politically-restricted Ministry-approved curriculum, which entailed learning strictly the theory of Defense Against the Dark Arts, with no practical applications, thus no spell work. When she was appointed "Hogwarts High Inquisitor", she used this position to evaluate, harass, and fire any teachers at Hogwarts she deemed unsatisfactory (Rowling, 2003/2014).

DeVos is a former Republican Party chairwoman in Michigan and chair of the pro-school-choice advocacy group American Federation for Children. Recently, she has been

appointed as the Education Secretary of the United States. She has been a shining light to members of the movement to privatize public education by working to create programs and pass laws that require the use of public funds to pay for private school tuition in the form of vouchers and similar programs (Strauss, 2016). Devos' agenda is similar to that of Umbridge in her priorities to privatize the school system. Devos has also been vocal about her disdain for teachers in the public school system. Following a visit to a DC school on February 17th, 2017, Devos stated that these teachers were in "...a 'receive mode'. They are waiting to be told what they have to do, and that's not going to bring success to an individual child. You have to have teachers who are empowered to facilitate great teaching" (Bologna, 2017).

As discussed earlier, new historicists in part examine the connections between literature and its context. When looking at the comparison of Tony Blair and Cornelius Fudge, we can see how Blair and his ongoings were a fair example of politics at the time. Fudge was written in such a way that his politics and actions were very similar to that of Blair. The accuracy of the portrayal of politicians suggests the popular image politicians may be deserved. That Fudge and Umbridge mirror modern politicians, even though the books were written years before, suggests that discourses about politicians remain the same, even a decade later.

Furthermore, the characterisation of politicians in this way influences public image of politicians. That they are portrayed in a negative light in fictitious novels such as Harry Potter could skew how people look at politicians in everyday life. This may be

especially prominent in children who have grown up reading these novels since it contributes to their idea of politicians. If these politicians are portrayed in a negative way, then children may grow up associating the politicians in their real life with negative thoughts and feelings. By choosing to have ineffectual and dangerous characters reflect a particular ideological viewpoint, Rowling shapes readers' perspectives of political action and efficacy. Rowlings' own political viewpoints are no secret; her many Tweets and online posts during the recent Brexit campaign demonstrate her own political affiliations and distaste for conservatism, which is directly challenged by characters like Umbridge.

Conclusion

At first reading, the *Harry Potter* series would seem as though it is merely a fantasy story about Harry Potter the chosen one, and his magical adventures at Hogwarts. However, when it is read through a new historicist and cultural critical lens, it becomes evident that this series is complex, and draws on figures and events in Western culture, such as Nazism and the abolition of slavery for characters and relationships. Harry Potter is a staple for new historicists who like to ask, "how has the event been interpreted?" or "what do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?" (Tyson, 2006, p. 282). It reflects its culture in many ways, one being the embodiment of the hatred for Nazis in the creation of Voldemort and his allies as a mirror of the Nazi Party. Another is the similarity between house-elves and slavery in America, particularly in the ways it was deeply entrenched in the culture of the

time. Lastly, the way politicians are represented in the books is similar to Tony Blair and Betsy Devos, modern politicians who came to prominence in recent years. The various connections to culture influence the culture in turn. By drawing on and reflecting particular political ideologies, actions, and characters, Rowling challenges readers to examine the political systems that shape their lives. The presence of Nazism perpetuates the ideas about Nazis and offers opportunities to discuss difficult topics in a safer context. How female political action is shown influences beliefs on that topic, as it does with ideas about the best way to counter racism and the interpretation of politicians. Overall, a new historical and cultural critical lens reveals the underlying connections of *Harry Potter* to its culture and time, and how it affects the present.

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Postcolonial Theory & *Harry Potter*

Andrew Patten, Aiden Pluta, Grace Pyke, & Chloe Weibe

Harry Potter has been loved by children and adults alike since it was first published in 1997 (Fransson, 2015, p. 2). Because of its popularity, J. K. Rowling's series has become a valuable teaching tool by allowing students and scholars to experience a literary world while stepping out of their own. Understanding and evaluating the *Harry Potter* series through a postcolonial lens allows us to discover parallels with historical events and evidence of colonialism and postcolonialism within the stories of J. K. Rowling.

Postcolonial theory examines the enduring effects of colonialism and analyzes "issues of power, economics, politics, religion, and culture and how these elements work in relation to colonial hegemony" (Boyle, Brizee, Chernouski & Tompkins, 2015, online). The direct influence of colonialism is the focal point in postcolonial history, demonstrating its widely consequential ideals and endorsement of European values. This theory explains the invasion and mistreatment of the Other by outlining the core attitudes and practices of those who colonized. By exploring topics of identity and Othering, and the contribution they make to the aspects of privilege and oppression, *Harry Potter* can be explored through a critical literary lens. Each of these topics will be examined in depth as underlying social issues within the series and connected to real world examples in an attempt to explore the continuing effect of colonialism. Through a fictional story, this analysis allows us to see the world around us in different ways.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory analyzes the effects of the colonial era that ranges from the late 1400s to the mid 1700s. Prasad (2003) explains the impact of this theory in their article entitled"*An Introduction to Post-Colonialism, Post-colonial Theory and Post-Colonial Literature*" by stating:

> The long history of Western colonialism, its global reach and the uniqueness of many of its constitutive practices and structures imply that Western colonials and non-Western resistance to such colonialism have played a significant role shaping the contours of the world as we know it today. Indeed, the continuing imprint of colonialism and anti-colonialism is discernible in a range of contemporary practices and institutions, whether economic, political, or cultural. Postcolonial theory and criticism represent and attempt to investigate the complex and deeply fraught dynamics of modern Western colonialism and anticolonial resistance, and the ongoing significance of the colonial encounter for people's lives both in the West and the non-West. (Prasad, 2003, p. 5)

Furthermore, postcolonial theory explores concepts of identity, Othering and Eurocentrism, and how these influences have oppressed colonized groups. Because the colonial invasion vastly employed Eurocentric values, colonized groups were ostracized and forced to adapt to these new practices. For example, this violation abruptly disturbed the cultural practices of Aboriginal peoples, and over time they were forced to

adhere to European ideals; anything differing from this value system was regarded as unacceptable, inadequate and substandard. While Aboriginal peoples were originally forced to follow the new rules set by colonizers, they also became compelled to do because they were gradually stripped of their unique culture and identity, causing tension. Because of this colonization, many groups were stripped of their identities and shunned by the majority; thus evidently presenting unrighteous oppression towards them. According a writing published by the National Museum of the American Indian, *Smithsonian Institution*, in reference to the colonization of the United States, colonization had a profound impact on Indigenous people:

> As more and more English colonists flooded into the Chesapeake region, Native peoples lost more of their lands. These encroachments by the colonists led to violence, which the English attempted to quell by establishing treaties with Native peoples. English settlers moved onto reservation lands and restricted Native uses of non-reservation lands. By the 1700s, Piscataway, Nanticoke, and Powhatan treaty rights were largely ignored. (Tayac, Schupman, & Simermeyer, n.d)

Postcolonial theory and *Harry Potter*

The historical record of colonization demonstrates the negative effects of violence, loss of identity and ostracizing of culture. Using identity, ethnicity, and hybridity as theoretical concepts, the *Harry Potter* series contains numerous references and ideas that link it with postcolonial thought.

Since J. K. Rowling, the author of the *Harry Potter* series was born in England, and the books themselves are set in that country, European culture has a strong influence on the series. Not only does the imaginary world of wizards exist in the United Kingdom, but Harry Potter, the protagonist, spends all of his life living in the United Kingdom with his relatives, the Dursleys. There is an evident link the the cultural and historical stance of the United Kingdom in relation to the setting of the story. As one of the most powerful empires in history, the British Empire has conquered and colonized many lands, cultures, religions, political views, and races (New World Encyclopedia, 2016). An article by Lee and Schultz (n.d.) states:

> The men who built the British Empire did so with the conviction that they were doing those they conquered a favor. They argued that the institutional package that they brought to the colonies—David Livingston's "Commerce, Christianity and Civilization" —would ultimately lead to a higher standard of living and quality of government than that provided by the institutions they destroyed (Livingston, 1868). While contemporary scholars no longer see colonialism as unambiguously positive, they do agree on its importance (p.2).

This does a good job of explaining the origins of the British power, generally founded upon upper-class, White, Christian ideals. These origins, as reflected in the *Harry Potter* series, portend the impact colonialism (through the setting of the novels) has on the series.

Identity

Within the wizarding world of *Harry Potter*, the theme of identity is prominently seen through the development of a cultural identity, which Hall describes as "a sort of collect 'one true self', hiding behind many other, more superficially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common" (Hall, 1990, p. 223). For the characters in the books by J. K. Rowling, this is the identity that can be examined through a postcolonial lens (Tyson, 2006).

Identity plays an important role in how a group is perceived, both by themselves and by others. In the novels, there are a plethora of examples of different indicators of the systemic oppression of different groups through the perceptions of their identities by themselves and other groups within the story. The human magic community within the *Harry Potter* series oppresses groups of magical beings in a number of ways that have parallels in global history. Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, oppression is evident in the forms of hybridity, which Prabhu (2007) describes as "a way out of binary thinking, allow the inscription of the agency of the subaltern, and even permit a restructuring and destabilizing of power" (p. 2) and the perception of ethnic identity, which Zou and Trueba (1998) states is "a worldview, a lifestyle, a language and a family structure" (p. 1) throughout the books.

Hybridity

Hybridity can be easily identified in the *Harry Potter* series as what is experienced by Muggle-born and half-blood witches and wizards. These groups are

viewed and treated similarly to groups such as Canadian Aboriginal peoples, who have suffered from the continuing effects of colonialism.

The parallels between the present and past treatment of Indigenous people in North America and the aforementioned group from *Harry Potter* is also notable. The hybridity of Muggle-born and half-blood witches and wizards finds them crossed between the magical and Muggle worlds. There is an obvious discrimination of Muggle-born wizards and witches by many characters in the *Harry Potter* series, most notably by Voldemort and his Death Eaters. As mentioned by Guðjónsdóttir (2014), "Lord Voldemort and his followers believe that this part of the society does not deserve magical powers or to get education how to use their ability" (p.12). This is due to the uninformed and stereotypical view wizards and witches have of Muggles, caused by the lack of education on this different group (Rowling, 2000, p. 187; Rowling, 2005, p. 18). The violence and subjugation of Muggle-born witches and wizards by the villain of the story is not the only instance of the oppression of non-pure-blood wizards and witches due to their identity. But rather, even within the environment of Hogwarts during the years Harry and his friends attended, the Muggle Studies class was considered a "soft option" (Rowling, 2000, p. 187) and was not taken seriously. This lack of emphasis on learning about Muggles meant that the Muggle identity within Muggle-born and half-blood students was not seen as equal to their wizard identity. Omitting prominent aspects of the wizardly world's past is comparable, to a certain extent, to the frequent omission of the contributions made by Indigenous Canadians to their country.

When analyzing *Harry Potter* through a postcolonial lens, it is evident that hybridity is prominent in the identities of various groups. Historically, an example of this is the Indian Residential School system in Canada. Indigenous Canadians were forced to endure harsh conditions under colonialist policy via residential schools from the 1870s to the closure of the last residential school in 1996 (Troniak, 2011, p. 1). The goal of the Residential Schools was for the "Aboriginal peoples to abandon their traditional beliefs and adopt western-based values and religions" (Partridge, 2010, p. 1). This is similar to how Muggle-born and half-blood witches and wizards are inadequately taught about Muggle topics in their education and encouraged to submit to alternate views or understandings. The suppression of Muggle-borns in the *Harry Potter* series can not be considered equal to the suppression of the harsh conditions that Indigenous children were forced to endure, however, parallels can be drawn between the effects of Residential Schools, Hogwarts education of Muggles, and postcolonialism. Both of these instances are situations in which those in positions of colonialist power choose to omit specific knowledge of the latter and instead educate them on the values and ideologies of the dominant group.

Ethnicity

Through countless scenarios in world history, the oppression of identity of groups due to their ethnic culture can be easily recognized. In *Harry Potter*, because the house-elves were discriminated against by the 'human magic users', their ethnic identity was ostracized and persecuted, a frequent concept in colonial stories.

Within the *Harry Potter* series, the house-elves, which are a slave race, are persistently oppressed. Liebmann (2008) states "the identification and rejection of essentialist discourses — wherein social groups or categories are presumed to possess universal features exclusive to all members — have become central to postcolonial notions of identity and cultural difference" (p. 83). This central point to postcolonialism is seen in the *Harry Potte*r series by how house-elves are represented as an ethnicity. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, Nearly Headless Nick (the ghost of Gryffindor House) makes the general statement "House-elves don't want sick leave and pensions!" (Rowling, 2004, p. 502). While this may be true for a majority of the house-elves in Hogwarts, one can learn in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* that all the other elves react "as though Dobby had said something rude and embarrassing" when Dobby tells Harry that he wants to be paid (Rowling, 2004, p. 1037). This quote also shows that Nearly Headless Nick was incorrect in his statement about the work of house-elves. Historically, the 'human magic users' have a higher social and political status, thus creating a false view of house-elves and their capabilities.

An example of this ethnic oppression is evident in the Ministry of Magic's Fountain of Magical Brethren present in *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix*. Rowling describes the first time Harry sees the statue:

> A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a

> goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard. (Rowling, 2003, p. 122)

This undoubtedly places human life highest in hierarchal standing by the governing body of the magic world.

The oppression of certain ethnic identities can also be seen in recent postcolonial countries. In Rwanda during the early 1990s, printing presses were used to create a newspaper called *Kangura* and according to Downing and Husband (2005), this newspaper proposed genocidal actions against Hutus through cartoons. This demonstrates an example of a government implementing and controlling the oppression of an ethnic minority to the public (Downing & Husband, 2005) similarly to the issue presented in the *Harry Potte*r series.

Colonialism continues to plague modern society - albeit referred to as postcolonialism - and can even be found in this coming of age story meant for children and young adults. *Harry Potter* offers a unique chance to view a world that is not our own through a postcolonial lens. By understanding and exercising this theory, one can gain a different perspective on the Muggles and house-elves in J. K. Rowling's fictional world. Many parallels can be drawn in connection to the treatment of Muggle-born, half-blood, and house-elf populations in comparison to real world examples of the effects of colonialism on a population such as Aboriginal peoples and ethnic minorities.

Othering

As noted previously, identity is a central aspect of postcolonial theory, which can cause problems when one group's identity is seen as foreign or 'Other'. Othering is a key feature of postcolonial theory, as it explains the relationship between colonizers and those who have been colonized. Gandhi defines Othering as:

> When a group of people from the same culture and who share the same values consider other people who in anyway differ from their culture and values as inferior. "The Other" is often described as inhuman and strange. When a hegemonic culture as such defines the Other, they the majority of the time construct a "us" in contrast to a "them" (Gandhi, as cited in Tyson, 1998, p. 433).

There are numerous examples of Othering in the *Harry Potter* series, and quite simply being Othered is 'being an outsider'. Harry Potter, an orphan and wizard, is seen as an outsider growing up in suburban London as he lives with his relatives, the Dursleys, who possess no form of magic abilities and are quite fearful of the notion of magic (Rowling, 1997). Because of their fear of magic, the Dursleys chose to ignore Harry's strange displays of seemingly uncontrollable oddities and outbursts due to his unconscious repression of magic (Rowling, 1997). Their disregard ostracizes Harry from the feeling of acceptance as a member of the Dursley family and as a member of regular society. Harry grows up without the knowledge of wizards or magic until his 11th birthday when he receives his acceptance into Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and

Wizardry (Rowling, 1997). Based on his wizardly abilities, Harry is Othered similarly to instances of many victims of colonialism in society.

After being exposed to the wizarding world, readers are introduced to the opposing view of the Dursleys in which wizards Other Muggles. Patterson (2009) states that "Wizards are a very closed society and treat every other group as an "Other"…Treating the Muggles as the "Other" is aimed at strengthening the wizarding community and its cultural identity. Closed societies have always stereotyped the Other and given it specific traits" (p. 119). This contrast gives readers both the perspective of feeling the weight of their beloved Harry being Othered by the Dursleys and the camaraderie of Othering Muggles as Harry joins his fellow witches and wizards in the parallel world of magic. Liebmann and Rizvi (2008) state:

> The postcolonial denunciation of essentialism hinges on a rejection of the simplistic binary oppositions upon which much of colonialist and neocolonialist discourse is predicated, such as civilized/savage, center/margin, First World/Third World, and the colonial Self/the colonized Other (p. 83).

Both Muggles and Wizards in the *Harry Potter* series demonstrate how easy it is to Other people and how various contexts can determine whether one plays the oppressor or the Other. In both situations highlighted above, the larger or more prominent society, whether that be the Muggles in the real world or the wizards in the wizarding world, demonstrate the isolation and dehumanizing behaviour of colonizers as they Other the strange or different in order to solidify their identity as dominant or

best. The concept of Othering, as demonstrated, is practiced by both the Muggles and wizards, therefore revealing how this concept is often normalized and how numerous contexts dictate whether or not groups or cultures are Othered or oppressed.

In the first example of Othering, the Dursleys display hostility and fear towards Harry, isolating him and hiding him from sight in his room under the stairs (Rowling, 1997). This can be compared to Canadians' response in forcing Japanese Canadians into internment camps after the bombing at Pearl Harbour in 1941 (Miki, 2004). Holslag (2015) states, "Othering often promotes a large divide between socio-economic, cultural, religious and political differences, resulting in cultural genocide – eliminating or dehumanizing a group of cultural practice" (p.2). Roy Miki (2004) writes:

> In 1942 the Canadian government … ordered the mass uprooting of the people of Japanese ancestry living in the "protected zone," an area that extended along the west coast of British Columbia and 100 miles (160 kilometers) inland. It established the British Columbia Security Commission on March 4 to carry out the incarceration of some 23,000 men, women and children who had been categorized as "enemy aliens." More than 75 percent of these people were either Canadian-born or naturalized citizens. Between March and October their citizenship rights were revoked, their properties, businesses, assets and personal belongings were seized – and, soon after, sold without their consent – and larger groups were scattered to what the government called "resettlement camps" but which in fact were sites of confinement. (p. 2-3)

Canadian Japanese were Othered and removed from fully participating in society, comparable to the way Harry was Othered by the Dursleys and removed from his participating in both his wizarding society as well as Muggle society. Although no accurate comparison can be drawn between a novel and such a dark moment in history, there are similarities in terms of postcolonial theory.

It is also possible to see this example flipped as wizards similarly isolate Muggles from participating or even knowing about the wizarding world. Categorizing Muggles as the Other and later on in the series as the enemy, can be tied into how the Canadian government viewed Canadians with Japanese heritage as an enemy. In both situations, an underlying feeling of fear and uncertainty drove the dominant group, or colonizers, to Other those who stood out as different.

Cesaire and Kelley (2000) state, “The colonizers' sense of superiority, their sense of mission as the world's civilizers, depends on turning the Other into a barbarian” (p. 5). As displayed in both *Harry Potter* and the stated examples throughout Canadian history, Othering plays a prominent role in analyzing postcolonial theory and explains the relationship between those who are oppressed and those who are privileged.

Conclusion

In the *Harry Potter* series, J. K. Rowling offered millions of readers the opportunity to explore the amazing fantasies portrayed in the novels. By viewing the series through a post-colonialist lens, the invasion and mistreatment of the Other by the colonizer is revealed. Through examining examples of identity, hybridity, and Othering,

one can easily relate the effects of colonialism to the storyline and characters in the novels. When the parallels between the real world and the fantasy world of *Harry Potter* are analyzed and compared, it is evident that many examples throughout the series reflect tenets of post colonialism. The writings of J. K. Rowling describe a fantasy world that includes social issues, including evidence of colonial practices. Seeing these examples in a fictional series can enable readers to see similar examples in their own worlds and lives.

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A Critical Marxist Analysis of *Harry Potter*

Ashlyn Brownell, Craig Fernandez, Mick Jeffries, & Lydia MacLeod

Marxism, a political and socio-economic ideology concerning class structure that was theorized by Karl Marx, can be used as an analytical lens in literature. For instance, in J. K. Rowling's fictional book series, *Harry Potter*, many of the books' circumstances can be viewed as Marxist as they demonstrate that inequality in society is the result of class hierarchy. One of the main tenets of Marxist theory is that there is a constant struggle between the upper class, which Marx referred to as the bourgeoisie, and the lower class, which he referred to as the proletariat (Amariglio, Callari, & Cullenberg 1989; Parkin, 1998; Callinicos, 2011).

In this essay we first analyze the blood classifications of "pure-blood", "half-blood", and "Muggle-born" found in the *Harry Potter* universe as a basis for hierarchical classification within the wizarding world. In relation to Marxism, pure-bloods represent the bourgeoisie and the Muggle-borns represent the proletariat. Secondly, a Marxist focus production, labour, and false consciousness are compared to the house-elf and wizard relationship, where house-elves are exploited for their labour. The final parallel to be drawn is the feud between the Dark Arts and good magical communities, which connects with our discussion on blood classification. Pure-bloods tend to practice the Dark Arts whereas Muggle-borns tend to practice good magic. This dynamic is the result of pure-bloods using Dark Arts to oppress those with Muggle blood.

In relation to class struggle, Marx theorized a proletariat revolution would occur when the lower class realizes the injustices of the class system and begins to push back against the oppressive bourgeoisie (Krawford, 2008; Amariglio et al., 1989). The final part of this paper highlights the wizarding revolution in the *Harry Potter* series and compares it to a Marxist proletariat revolution.

Blood Classification

In the wizarding world, there is a noticeable division between wizards that come from all-magic families, called pure-bloods, and those with non-magical blood in their families, called Muggle-borns and half-bloods. The classist opinion that quality is "in the blood" (Tyson, 2006, p. 59), is taken literally and pure-blood families are highly regarded within the wizarding world, making them what Marx calls the bourgeoisie, while Muggle-borns are the proletariat. In Marxist theory, the focus tends to be on the financial advantages to being a part of the rich bourgeoisie, and the disadvantages to being a part of the poorer proletariat (Amariglio et al., 1989; Parkin, 1998). In contrast, in the *Harry Potter* series, such advantages take shape mostly as social advantages, rather than tangible economic differences.

Middle Class

According to Marxist theorists, a middle class exists, but is not directly impacted by the class struggle (Krawford, 2008; Amariglio et al., 1989). In *Harry Potter*, the middle class is represented by half-blood wizards as they are neither pure-blood wizards nor do they lack any wizard blood at all like the Muggle-born. Presently, in our non-

wizarding world, society is seeing a greater divide between the highest and lowest classes (Callinicos, 2011). Therefore, while the middle class exists, they are simply the least affected, as are the half-bloods in the Harry Potter universe, making the "middle class" the bystanders. In Marxism, the class struggle is between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, and in *Harry Potter*, a similar dynamic exists between pure-bloods and Muggle-borns.

It becomes increasingly obvious throughout the *Harry Potter* series how unfounded the blood class system is. As in Marxism, there is no legitimate difference between the people of high and low classes, aside from the social constructs of lifestyle, labour, and education (Burr, 2003). For instance, Ron Weasley, a pure-blood wizard, takes note of this injustice in the way that his friend Hermione, a Muggle-born, is treated due to her being of lower blood classification:

> "It's about the most insulting thing he could think of," gasped Ron, coming back up. "Mudblood's a really foul name for someone who is Muggle-born — you know, non-magic parents. There are some wizards — like Malfoy's family — who think they're better than everyone else because they're what people call pure-blood". (Rowling, 1998, p.234)

Through this scene, Rowling exposes the maltreatment of Muggle-borns, showing that it is both groundless and hierarchical. Hermione exhibits exceptional magical abilities, proving the groundlessness of the blood class argument.

Elitism

Derived from the classist division in the *Harry Potter* series, elitism is prevalent and influential in the wizarding world. Salazar Slytherin, one of four founders of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, was a pure-blood elitist:

> Slytherin wished to be more selective about the students admitted to Hogwarts. He believed that magical learning should be kept within all-magic families. He disliked taking students of Muggle parentage, believing them to be untrustworthy. (Rowling, 1999, p.303)

The idea that divisions between the students at Hogwarts should be based on parentage and background, Marx would argue, comes from an elitist frame of mind (Krawford, 2008). Slytherin holds a wealth of social capital, placing him at the top of the class pyramid. Not only is he a founder of the largest wizarding school in the United Kingdom, but he comes from an all-magical family, is a Parselmouth (meaning he speaks Parseltongue, a language understood only by powerful Dark wizards and snakes), and is a prominent figure in the Dark Arts, having created the Chamber of Secrets at Hogwarts. In this sense, capital is not based in traditional economics; rather it is to own outstanding magical ability and be of pure-blood descent.

According to Marx, elitism is a symptom of alienation of the bourgeoisie: the bourgeoisie's actions taken to exploit and oppress the rest of society cause the social bonds that supposedly tie us all together to become weak, and, therefore, cause conflict and distant relationships (Callinicos, 2011). As Slytherin attempts to use his wizarding

capital and high standing to solidify the division that exists between the magical blood classifications, he further distances himself from those classes by literally alienating himself, as he leaves his founding position at Hogwarts. In perpetuating elitism, Slytherin dehumanizes Muggle-borns and half-blood wizarding families, just as the bourgeoisie dehumanize the proletariat, exploiting them for their labour and he further alienates the blood classes from each other. Even though he is gone, he leaves behind two elitist legacies that would ensure his ideologies would be upheld in the future: the Chamber of Secrets and the House of Slytherin.

Chamber of Secrets

The more destructive of the two Slytherin legacies, the Chamber of Secrets, was a magical way to invoke terror and rid the school of Muggle-borns. In relation to Marxism, the Chamber of Secrets represents one of the ways in which the bourgeoisie keep the proletariat in their position as lower class (Parkin, 1998; Krawford, 2008). By restricting Hogwarts school to higher-class wizards, it deprives Muggle-borns of education, therefore reinforcing their false consciousness; that the ways things are is the way they should be. According to Marxism, "the working classes were seen to have failed to recognize their 'true' economic and political interests by internalizing the bourgeois values of their oppressors" (Augoustinos, 1999, p.298). In other words, the proletariat contribute to their own oppression even if it is at their expense. This being said, had Slytherin succeeded in ridding the school of Muggle-borns, this would have lead the different blood classes to have internalized the hierarchy and their placement

in it. The pure-bloods in Hogwarts would think that they are rightfully exercising their magic, whereas the Muggle-borns would have had no choice but to accept their position and perhaps been forced to attend a new but less "elite" school.

The House of Slytherin

The second legacy left by Slytherin is the House of Slytherin, one of the four houses of Hogwarts school. Rowling (1998) wrote that "there's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one" (p. 143). You-Know-Who is a reference to Voldemort, the primary Dark wizard antagonist of the *Harry Potter* series, and Rowling includes this reference in order to demonstrate the culture of Dark Arts that runs strong in Slytherin House.

The most prevalent Slytherin member in the book series is Draco Malfoy, an elitist, pure-blood wizard. Draco flaunts his pure-blood status at Hogwarts school, harassing Muggle-borns, and causing conflict amongst students. Draco's father, Lucius, bought the Slytherin Quidditch team an entire set of new broomsticks, to which Hermione commented:

> "at least no one on the Gryffindor team had to buy their way in," said Hermione sharply. "They got in on pure talent." The smug look on Malfoy's face flickered. "No one asked your opinion, you filthy little Mudblood," he spat. (Rowling, 1999, p. 201)

Draco's blood and, at least in this case, monetary capital is evident by how he carries himself and interacts with his peers. This excerpt is one of the few moments

throughout the series that Rowling demonstrates direct Marxist themes, where there is a definitive economic advantage to the wizard class system. Having the new broomsticks gives Slytherin an advantage that will help them excel in their sport, leading the Slytherin team to believe that they are better because they worked harder. In reality, this simply sets others up for disadvantage, just like the capitalist system works to keep the impoverished in poverty and the wealthy, wealthy (Callinicos, 2011).

House-Elves

Another example through which Marxist concepts may be viewed in the *Harry Potter* series is the relationship between house-elves and wizards. This class system, and that of blood classification, are connected by virtue of the fact that house-elves are commonly used in pure-blood households. The power dynamic between house-elves and wizards is similar to that of slave and slave-owner, where the wizard is the slave-owner and the house-elf is always the acquiescent slave. As explained by Hurst (2000), the control that the social system has over people's actions causes them to be enslaved because their actions are no longer their choices, but consequences of the system's overpowering control. Rowling dramatizes this relationship in the way that house-elves must obey their master no matter what.

This is exemplified in the way that Kreacher, the Black family's house-elf, submits himself to Sirius Black, despite Sirius's betrayal of the family's tradition of Dark Arts, which Kreacher is bitter towards. Kreacher mumbles to himself: "oh my poor Mistress… if she knew the scum they've let in her house, what would she say to old Kreacher…

Mudbloods and werewolves and traitors and thieves, poor old Kreacher, what can he do. …" (Rowling, 2003, p. 254-5). Through this passage, Kreacher voices his inability to disobey his masters, though it goes against his personal morals. He does not question or challenge this power dynamic, demonstrating how unconscious he is of the exploitation that house-elves face.

An example of false consciousness, a key part of what keeps house-elves in their place, are how house-elves view their life's purpose: pleasing their master. They are not aware of the larger systemic practices that control them and thereby keep them in their place, just as the proletariat are not aware of the same practices in Marxist theory. Eyerman (1981) explains that "false consciousness came to mean a distorted and limited form of experience in society that could be applied to all social groups and classes" (p.43). This would imply that house-elves live a false version of reality. Through false consciousness, wizards are able to maintain the classist dynamic that exists between themselves and house-elves, prolonging and intensifying the class struggle by keeping house-elves oblivious to the situation they are in.

Dobby

Dobby is an example of a house-elf that has broken false consciousness. He is freed from his master by Harry Potter (Rowling, 1998), which allows him to become aware of the value of his labour. Dobby is the only house-elf in the series that recognizes the inequalities that exist in the wizard - house-elf dynamic. In *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* he actively searches for paid work (Rowling, 2000). Dobby is

conscious of the classism he has experienced, and of the huge margin of profit wizards are receiving from house-elves.

Additionally, Dobby recognizes what is called "surplus value" in Marxist theory, where the bourgeoisie appropriate profit generated as a result of the labour input of the proletariat. (Holmes et al., 2007, Walters & Crook, 1995 as cited in Krawford, 2009, p.3). In regards to *Harry Potter*, the house-elves are the ones whose labour results in profit, and the wizards being those who appropriate it. According to Marx, "since the surplus capital is generated by the variable capital [labour], it should be appropriated by the variable capital and not the capitalist because the capitalist plays no role in the original production of the commodity" (Althusser, 1997, p.7). In other words, the proletariat should receive the entire profit for their labor, and the bourgeoisie none. In this instance, Rowling demonstrates that house-elves receive none of the profit for the product they produce, thus demonstrating Marxist ideals and how a classed society continues to perpetuate inequality.

Ministry of Magic

On the complete other side of the social structure from the house-elves there is the Ministry of Magic. Whereas house-elves are lower than wizards and are oppressed in the system, the Ministry is the regulatory body of the wizards, and is privileged in the system, similar to a government in the non-magic world.

The Ministry is instrumental in upholding the classist values of the wizarding world and propagating their ideas throughout all of wizarding society. In this way, they

are a tool of the bourgeoisie. The Ministry values are not explicitly classist in the sense that they hire only pure-bloods, but their actions reflect classist values in many ways. For example, Lucius Malfoy Draco's father), a pure-blood, is very high-ranking and has a lot of influence in the Ministry. Also, there are two statues at the Ministry that explicitly demonstrate classist ideology. The first, most well-known statue depicts the hierarchy of wizards and other magical creatures.

> Halfway down the hall was a fountain. A group of golden statues, larger than life-size, stood in the middle of a circular pool. Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him were a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin, and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard. Glittering jets of water were flying from the ends of the two wands, the point of the centaur's arrow, the tip of the goblin's hat, and each of the house-elf's ears. (Rowling, 2003, p. 267-268)

This statue and its placement send a clear message that wizards are to be admired above all other magical creatures. In the middle of the main hallway entering the Ministry of Magic, the wizard is shown to be the largest, and most important creature above witches, centaurs, goblins, and house-elves.

The second statue, mentioned only in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, 2007), the seventh book of the series depicts wizards as greater than Muggles.

> "Oh, very funny … It's horrible, isn't it?" she said to Harry, who was staring up at the statue. "Have you seen what [the wizards are] sitting on?
>
> Harry looked more closely and realized that what he had thought were decoratively carved thrones were actually mounds of carved humans: hundreds and hundreds of naked bodies, men, women, and children, all with rather stupid, ugly faces, twisted and pressed together to support the weight of the handsomely robed wizards (Rowling, 2007, p. 441-2).

This second statue emphasizes the hierarchy that is evident between wizards and Muggles. This hierarchy is also represented by Mr. Weasley's inability to move up in the Ministry because he is a Muggle-lover, and is fascinated by how Muggles cope without the use of magic (Rowling, 1999). Altogether, although not explicit, the Ministry demonstrates classist values through their hiring and promotion practices, the statues they maintain, and the limits they place on certain staff members.

The Ministry also exercises control over the main media source, *The Daily Prophet*, which means that Ministry values are seen as the norm in general society (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Through media control, the Ministry filters the information that wizards receive, which feeds into and helps engender the false consciousness of the lower blood classes. For instance, The Daily Prophet denied the fact that Voldemort was rising to power again and did so to help avoid uproar, panic, and also resistance of the Dark Arts.

The Order of the Phoenix

The Order of the Phoenix is a group of skilled wizards that band together to fight Voldemort, his assembly, and the Dark Arts in general. In this way, they go against the Ministry in acknowledging the renewed presence of Voldemort, and in breaking the false consciousness that the Ministry works hard to keep.

In breaking false consciousness, the Order of the Phoenix threatens to reveal the class dynamics and struggle that the Ministry has so often covered up. As discussed in the above section, the Ministry uses media and other strategies to control the wizarding world in their favour, the most popular newspaper in the wizarding world is their closest contact:

> What's more, the Ministry's leaning heavily on the Daily Prophet not to report any of what they're calling Dumbledore's rumor-mongering, so most of the wizarding community are completely unaware anything's happened, and that makes them easy targets for the Death Eaters if they're using the Imperius Curse. (Rowling, 2003, p. 202)

This excerpt shows the immediate danger that the Ministry's efforts to hide the truth from the public really poses. With little knowledge, the general public is extremely vulnerable to Voldemort's Death Eaters. It is the mission of the Order of the Phoenix to reveal this truth to the public and stop Voldemort from wreaking havoc and causing disaster.

Once the secret of Voldemort's return became too evident to hide, the Ministry let it be known the peril that the wizarding world was facing. Fear became rampant and action to protect people against Voldemort and his forces became more frequent. This is the beginning of what Marx would call a proletariat revolution. The false consciousness has been broken and the wizarding world is now completely aware of the forces controlling them. The breaking of false consciousness began with the Order of the Phoenix but soon spread to all wizards.

Revolution

The basis of the revolution in the Harry Potter series, one that is comparable with a Marxist Proletariat revolution, is due to both blood-class and the good magic versus Dark Arts conflicts. As previously stated, the beginning of this revolution is sparked by the awareness of a few wizards, the most notable aside from the Order of the Phoenix being Harry Potter and his friends at Hogwarts.

Resistance and Dumbledore's Army

The Ministry's seizure of control over Hogwarts in the fifth book of the series caused great oppression, especially in regards to the students' learning of defense against the Dark Arts. Their lessons were restricted to study of Dark Arts literature, rather than experiential learning that would prepare them for the upcoming dangers. As Hermione takes education very seriously, she is the first to fight back against the new curriculum. She brings together a group of trustworthy students to learn Dark Arts defense in secret, suggesting Harry as their leader. Her rhetoric being:

"'I want to be properly trained in Defense because … because …' She took a great breath and finished, 'Because Lord Voldemort's back.' The reaction was immediate and predictable" (Rowling, 2003, p. 778). This represents the beginning of pushback against the Ministry's control over the school, triggering a revolution. Their reaction to the use of the name Voldemort shows the taboo nature of the name and what it represents. Hermione's boldness in addressing Voldemort by his true name ignited courage and passion for the students to fight backK. Hermione's actions would eventually lead to the formation of Dumbledore's Army, a group of students at Hogwarts that broke false consciousness and began preparing themselves for the revolution to come (Rowling, 2003).

Purebloods, Dark Arts Culture, and Revolution

To tie the wizarding revolution into classism, the link between pure-blood elitism and Dark Arts culture must be made explicit. Voldemort, the Darkest wizard of all time, gained inspiration from Salazar Slytherin, the most elitist pure-blood wizard to be mentioned in the book series. Though Voldemort was half-blood, he resented his Muggle-born father for abandoning his mother, his value of pure-blood ancestry stemmed from this resentment (Rowling, 2005). He was infatuated with ridding Hogwarts of Muggle-borns through the use of Dark magic, which was facilitated by the Chamber of Secrets that Slytherin left behind (Rowling, 1999). Later in life he swapped his Muggle name, Tom Marvolo Riddle, for an anagram of the same letters: Lord Voldemort (Rowling, 1999). The bitterness that he held towards his father spun into

craving for power and a higher ranking in the classist wizarding society. The power he eventually attained was due to his using magical talents for evil purposes. He surrounded himself with pure-bloods, which represented the majority of his followers. By working his way to become the Darkest, most destructive wizard to exist, he perpetuated pure-blood elitism and solidified the hierarchy that existed between the blood classes. Throughout the series, there is a pure-blood trend in the Dark Arts community. In *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory,* Eagleton (2006) writes: "there are in fact no classes; there are only ways of seeing people as classes… We can group individuals into particular classes, nations or races, as a way of refusing them individual recognition" (p. 29). To apply this theory to Harry Potter, Voldemort's elitist attitude, in correspondence with him being half-blood, demonstrates that classes do not create types of people, this is merely something that individuals fall victim to. They adhere to the inclination of their class. In this case, purebloods equate themselves with Dark magic and dominance.

Overthrowing the Bourgeoisie

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx's philosophy on overthrowing the bourgeoisie was that the people of the working world must unite, for they "have nothing to lose but [their] chains" (Marx & Engels, 1908, p. 34). The wizarding revolution that occurs in the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, where there is resistance built up in the magical community to fight back against Voldemort's following, is comparable to Marx's idea of a proletariat revolution to overthrow the

bourgeoisie. Karl Marx believed "that the proletariat will one day spontaneously develop the class consciousness needed to rise up in violent revolution against their oppressors and create a classless society" (Tyson, 2006, p. 54). A similar heist is undertaken in the *Harry Potter* series once a class consciousness develops, where Voldemort and his followers are defeated in the final book by an army of good wizards with varied blood backgrounds (Rowling, 2007). The "oppressors" in this case are those who support Voldemort's movement of Dark magic and his yearning for power. Upon his death, the privilege of being a part of the Dark Arts, or that of being pure-blood, becomes insignificant. This restores an egalitarian wizarding society in regards to blood classification, or as Marx would label it, a classless society. However, in this case, the class labels do not cease to exist, but their implications of power do.

Conclusion

Like much literature, even a fictional series such as Harry Potter can be viewed under a Marxist lens. Certain aspects of the series reflect the injustice in society that Marx points out, such as the ungrounded treatment of Muggle-borns like Hermione Granger (Rowling, 1999). Certain aspects also demonstrate Marxist concepts and ideals, such as Dobby breaking false consciousness and demanding pay for his labour (Rowling, 2000). Rowling's work is comparable to human society in the way that it is structured, and how individuals are classified. The injustice that is present in the Harry Potter series due to blood classification represents Marx's focal argument: the class struggle. The Harry Potter series exemplifies the class struggle through categorizing the

magical community into pure-bloods, half-bloods, and Muggle-borns, illustrating a clear distinction of class. The inclusion of blood classification, false consciousness, house-elf enslavement, and the revolution against the Dark Arts in the Harry Potter series demonstrates that Rowling constructed a fictional world that reflects many of the concepts Marx was discussing over 150 years ago.

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The *Harry Potter* Hierarchy: Critical Race Theory and *Harry Potter*

Olivia Hamilton, Chloe Jardine, Grace Mangusso, and Allison Turner

Critical race theory provides an in-depth look at the unique ways in which race and racism operate within various cultures and societies. These practices maintain cultural hegemony, or dominance, created by the politically and socially privileged. This paper will analyze the implications of race as seen in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series in regards to the hierarchy that influences all beings in the magical world. Through the exploration of the constructions of race within the *Harry Potter* series, we will explore by whom and for what purpose the development of a system of privilege and oppression is created to contribute to the levels of superiority and inferiority of various beings both within and outside the wizarding world.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) was "created primarily, though not exclusively, by progressive intellectuals of colour" (West, 1995, p. xi). CRT originally stemmed from critical legal studies and civil movements throughout history (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Ladson-Billings (1998) explains "CRT begins with the notion that racism is 'normal, not aberrant, in American society', and, because it is so enmeshed in the fabric of our social order, it appears both normal and natural to people in this culture" (p.11). As oppressed groups make progress towards equality in society, our application of critical race theory adapts as our conception of race evolves. In this paper, we will

examine the *Harry Potter* series through a critical race theory lens and analyze how the constructions of race are incorporated in J. K. Rowling's fictional world.

Tyson's Basic Tenets

According to Tyson (2006), CRT has six basic tenets. The first tenet is everyday racism, which commonly occurs when privileged societal groups cannot identify racism as a modern issue. This type of racism continues to be very prominent and is expressed in the form of both physical and verbal attacks. The second tenet represents race as a result of interest convergence, also known as material determinism. This occurs when racism overlaps with the interests or desires of a White individual and when racism is used to exploit people of colour. Tenet three outlines the ideal that race is socially constructed. This tenet assumes that the distinction of races is arbitrary as the physical differences amongst various races are not any greater than those within them. The fourth tenet states that differential racialization exists within the practice of the dominant group to accommodate their shifting needs by racializing minority groups at varying times. This is similar to the second tenet whereby the dominant White group uses race to their advantage; however, it adds that it can change from time to time based upon the dominant group's needs. The fifth tenet is intersectionality. Intersectionality explains that no one has a single identity based on a single exterior characteristic. All personal identities intersect with each other including sexual orientation, economic status, level of social hierarchy, etc. Lastly, the sixth tenet outlines the voice of colour. Many critical race theorists believe that racial minorities

are in a better position to speak about race and racism because they have information and experience that racially privileged groups do not (Tyson, 2006). In combination, all six of Tyson's tenets can be used to assess the implications of the racial inequalities present in *Harry Potter.*

Storytelling is a key aspect in correlation to the six tenets of critical race theory (Tyson, 2006). Storytelling has been a primary medium for many legal scholars, be the anecdotal stories or fictional (Harris, 2012). It is used to criticize the societal and legal subtleties that feed into the subtle yet unjust racism that people of colour face. Because critical race theory is often used in the analysis of literature, we can easily apply much of the theory to the fictional tales of Harry Potter (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Muggles and Wizards

One application of critical race theory in the *Harry Potter* series lies within the distinction between Muggles and wizards. Wizards and Muggles have a very unique relationship as both groups have extremists who perceive themselves to be superior. However, before delving into this relationship, it is important to understand the history of these two sub-categories between both the wizarding and outside world.

The Evolution of Wizard and Muggle Relations

Wizards are humans who inherit magical abilities from magical members of their families. Muggles are non-magical people typically born into non-magical families and do not hold any magical powers (Rowling, 1997). Muggles are often unaware of the wizarding world with the exceptions of close family members or friends of wizards. This

was not always the case though, as before the International Statute of Wizard Secrecy was enacted in 1692, Muggles were aware of wizards and the magical world (Rowling, 2007). They viewed them as evil beings and burned the witches and wizards on a stake, forcing them into hiding (Rowling, 1999). This mistreatment of wizards is due to the fear endured by Muggles based in their discomfort with the abnormal attributes exemplified by wizards. Tyson's (2006) first tenet, everyday racism, can be related to this mistreated as a result of fear and misunderstanding regarding the unknown.

As a result of their marginalization, wizards developed a separate society away from the oppression exerted by the Muggles, creating their own hierarchy through the gain of social and political power in the magical world. Subsequently, by creating their own education system and government, the original power dynamic between wizards and Muggles shifted as wizards gained knowledge and acceptance of themselves and their powers, resulting in the growth of their abilities and the gain of social capital (Rowling, 2007). Consequently, many wizards began exercising their power to manipulate Muggles at their convenience, exemplified in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* when the wizards bewitch Muggles and use their campground for a large wizard gathering (Rowling, 2000). Though these are the behaviours of a minority, they expose the inequality inherent in Rowling's fictional world, and can help the reader look critically at their own society.

Differing Opinions of Magical and Non-Magical People

When analyzing the relationship between Muggles and wizards, it should be noted that various individuals hold differing opinions dependent on their interactions and experiences with members of each group. For example, simply approaching the situation and viewpoint of Harry Potter's Muggle relatives, the Dursleys, would lead one to believe that wizards are malicious and irresponsible creatures who must be feared and whose powers must be suppressed (Rowling, 1997). The Dursleys were very concerned with their wizard nephew, Harry Potter, living and associating with them, since"as far as they were concerned, having a wizard in the family was a matter of the deepest shame," (Rowling, 1998, p. 15). This parallels the type of behavior discussed in CRT because, as Ladson-Billings (1998) explores, we have become immune to the effects of racism in our culture. However, while a large majority of Muggles feel this way about wizards, there are exceptions, such as Hermione Granger's family. Hermione is a wizard who was born to Muggle parents who were very supportive of her wizarding endeavors and education. In contrast, there are wizards such as Dumbledore and the Weasley family who are accused of being "Muggle-lovers" for their appreciation and fascination with those outside the wizarding world. Divergently, there are wizards such as the prominent Malfoy family who are disgusted by the Muggle world entirely. There are also wizards like Araminta Meliflua who attempted to persuade the Ministry of Magic to declare the legalization of Muggle-hunting (Rowling, 2003). This displays the discrepancy in opinions of Muggles and wizards by both their counterparts and

outsiders throughout the *Harry Potter* series. These arbitrary opinions exemplify the relevance and implications of the idea that race is socially constructed (Tyson, 2006).

Social Constructions of Race in *Harry Potter*

In order to understand the implications of race within the *Harry* Potter series, one must first make the distinction between the various blood statuses present in the wizarding world; pure-bloods, half-bloods, Mudbloods, and Squibs. Before interpreting how these divisions constitute social hierarchy – contributing to levels of power and privilege in the magical world which are paralleled to those of the outside world, it is important to note what each distinction means. The classifications of the blood divisions are in relation to the purity of a wizard as a result of their genetic inheritance. A pure-blood, as mentioned in the name, is regarded by some to be the purest form of a wizard. People who identify as pure-bloods are born into families made up of solely wizards and witches. The power associated with being a pure-blood immediately places individuals at the top of the social hierarchy solely based on biological factors with no regard for their magical abilities.

Half-bloods have mixed heritage due to a variety of wizards and Muggles throughout their family history. This is exemplified in Harry Potter, since his mother was a Muggle-born witch and his father born a pure-blood wizard. Harry is clearly not an even split between Muggle heritage and wizard heritage, but is still considered a half-blood. People of pure-blood lineage who support the supremacy of blood status are

sometimes disgusted by Muggle-born wizards as they believe that marrying a non-magical person dilutes the wizard blood thus making them weaker.

Muggle-born wizards and witches have no recent magical history in their families yet have acquired the magical gene. While they are typically identified as Muggle-born wizards, they are also referred to using the derogatory term 'Mudbloods' (Rowling, 1998). This racial slur is used to discredit their magical abilities and enacted most commonly, but not exclusively, by pure-blood wizards and implies that Muggle-born wizards are inferior and not worthy of their magical abilities. These unfounded assumptions extend the oppression of Muggle-born wizards as they are constantly being underestimated and marginalized, contributing to the social hierarchy present in the wizarding world and constituting a power imbalance with preference given to pure-blood wizards (Tyson, 2006).

The last type of wizard, which falls at the bottom of the hierarchy, is a Squib. Squibs are born into wizarding families yet have no magical capabilities. Typically, they are seen as an embarrassment to their families and are ashamed of their incapacity to perform magic (Rowling, 1998). This is illustrated in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Rowling, 1998) when Harry discovers that the groundskeeper, Filch, has a Kwikspell book meant for wizards who cannot perform magic. Filch immediately tells Harry to leave and demands he tell no one what he saw, indicating that being a Squib is one of the most dreadful qualities that a person can possess (Rowling, 1998). It is also important to note that Filch has one of the most menial jobs at Hogwarts and many

people dislike him for reasons outside of his inability to complete magic. This normalization of subtle oppressions throughout various instances in *Harry Potter* are large contributors to the accumulation of social capital by privileged groups and segregates those who can and cannot perform magic within the wizarding world.

Discrimination Based on Blood Status

There are various levels of interaction between all four types of wizards and witches. A social and political hierarchy is evident amongst the blood statuses, with the pure-bloods at the top. This hierarchy was created by and for the pure-blood wizards in order to feed their desire for superiority, power, and privilege. This demonstrates interest convergence - where the privileged group uses racism to gain social capital (Tyson, 2006). Acting upon this hierarchy is particularly characteristic of pure-bloods in addition to those who idolize the superiority of pure-bloods.

This is particularly apparent in the Malfoy family, a pure-blood wizarding family. The first instance of discrimination based on blood status in the book occurs when Draco Malfoy speaks to Hermione, one of the main protagonists and Harry Potter's best friend. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Malfoy calls her a "filthy little Mudblood" (Rowling, 1998, p. 205) when she states her opinion and Malfoy does not think it is worthy because she is Muggle-born. This parallels the first of Tyson's (2006) tenets, everyday racism. It is discrimination that many Mudbloods face every day in the wizarding world. In a similar way, this is something that minority races face every day in their lives in modern society as well.

Ladson-Billings (1998) recalled that she faced similar discrimination when she was in a high class lounge after being a guest lecturer at a university and a White male asked her when they would be served, assuming she worked at the lounge because of her skin colour. A further example, one of the other wizarding schools, Durmstrang Institute, prohibits the admission of Mudblood wizards. This parallels the segregation that existed in schooling before the civil rights movement which prohibited people of colour from attending the same school as White people. Other characters in Harry Potter, such as Dumbledore, have been devalued as wizards by certain purist families due to their identification as "Mudblood-lovers" (Rowling, 2000, p. 265). This supports the discrimination that occurs not only towards the minority group but also those in affiliation or association with them.

Half-blood wizards are typically less oppressive towards Mudbloods; however, this is not always the case. Lord Voldemort, the main antagonist throughout the *Harry Potter* series, is a half-blood himself but despises Muggle-born wizards and everything associated with the Muggle world. He proves this by murdering his entire Muggle family and adopting the common pure-blood ideal, in addition to recruiting followers based on their hatred of Muggles and Muggle-born wizards. This is a prime example Tyson's (2006) second tenet of critical race theory - material determinism. Voldemort uses the wizarding world's application of racism to gain support and power during his evil reign. According to Vollmer and Gappa (2007), "Voldemort's racism is relative to his

desire for power" (p. 2). Voldemort knows he needs support in order to gain power and uses the racism already present in wizarding society as a tool to gain that support.

What is important to notice is that there are no inherent magical differences amongst each type of wizard, with the exception of Squibs. Each witch or wizard can perform the same spells; their blood status is irrelevant to their magical success as a member of the wizarding world. This proves that blood status, in relation to race, is socially constructed and used to extend the power and privilege of pureblood wizards, demonstrating the third tenet of critical race theory (Tyson, 2006). It is an irrelevant method being used to classify wizards and gives increased power to the powerful and less to the already weakened groups.

Magical Creatures

Race is evident in a variety of contexts within J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series. Mystical races are described and play a variety of roles throughout the series. These races suffer from discrimination just as minority races do within our modern world. Through a critical race theory lens, it is evident that Rowling portrays an underlying theme of overcoming racism and divisions created by race throughout the series, where the protagonists learn how to confront and tackle racism both individually and on a more systemic level (Horne, 2010).

The Oppression of Magical Creatures

The Ministry of Magic is the government that reifies the racial hierarchy within the wizarding world. It places wizards at the top of this hierarchy; therefore, allowing them

to regulate both wizards and magical creatures. The mythological creatures Rowling has created within the *Harry Potter* series are all supervised in the wizarding world by the Ministry of Magic's Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures. The goal of the department is to ensure the control of creatures, to keep them from harming those in the wizarding community, or allowing the wizarding community to be discovered by the Muggle world (Rowling, 2000).

Tyson's (2006) second tenet of CRT, interest convergence, can easily be seen in this departmental portrayal throughout the *Harry Potter* series. The Ministry of Magic uses the Department of the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures to keep a restraint on this minority in the both the wizard and Muggle world. Many of the creatures supervised by this department such as werewolves and centaurs have significant physical ability and intelligence equivalent to that of wizards. However, they are treated as less-valued beings. Simply the title of the department, 'Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures' (Rowling, 2000), insinuates that these creatures need controlling, regulating, and are not composed or self-aware, but impulsive, irrational, and unintelligent. The decision of the Ministry of Magic to use the terms *control* and *regulate* in the name of their department is the underlying type of racism that affects minority groups every day. This benefits wizards, the privileged and powerful group, as they are considered superior and therefore capable of holding higher jobs, responsibilities, and social statuses in the wizarding world. These may be simple and

subtle instances of racism, but this judgment and prejudice contributes to the daily mistreatment and marginalization of the minority groups created in *Harry Potter*.

The "Othering" of Magical Creatures

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, J. K. Rowling introduces a wide variety of mystical creatures and creations, which in the eyes of the Ministry of Magic are considered to be "Others". In the article, "Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*", Horne (2010) categorizes these Others in terms of the 'dangerous but used Other', the 'enslaved Other', the 'separatist Other', and the 'evil Other'. Others do not fit the parameters of commonly defined race and become the marginalized group. The Ministry of Magic contributes to the oppression and systemic isolation of magical creatures by treating them as Others.

The classification of the enslaved Other is demonstrated through J. K. Rowling's depiction of house-elves in the series. The portrayal of house-elves can be read as an echo of the enslavement faced by African Americans and other minorities. Multiple house-elves make appearances throughout the books, the most prominent being Dobby. As a character, Dobby embodies many characteristics of an enslaved Other. The most obvious and glaring would be his role as a dedicated servant to the prominent Malfoy family in the wizarding community. Dobby is under the impression that he must serve no matter the treatment he receives, as that is all he knows to do. The Malfoy family does not regard Dobby as a valuable being which becomes apparent when he speaks about his home life to Harry in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (Rowling,

1998) saying “Dobby is used to death threats, sir. Dobby gets them five times a day at home” (p. 320). The only way house-elves can be freed from their enslavement is to receive a piece of clothing from their master; thus leaving the power to release them in their oppressor’s hands (Horne, 2010). This allows the oppressors to exert their power over the oppressed by using differential racialization; the idea that in response to their shifting needs, the privileged group uses racism as a method to justify their mistreatment of the oppressed (Tyson, 2006). Ron Weasley’s view of house-elves is that, “They. Like. It. They *like* being enslaved!” (Rowling, 2000, p. 356), acting as an example of rationalization in which he creates false but plausible excuses to justify unacceptable behavior (Weiten & Mccann, 2016, p. 525). Ron’s character reflects his upbringing, and the widespread and subversive nature of racism in the wizarding world.

The protagonists of the *Harry Potter* series all encounter house-elves at one point or another. Ron has been familiar with house-elves for his entire life, as he grew up in the wizarding world. Harry and Hermione first encounter house elves when they enter the wizarding world. Both Harry and Hermione come to realizations about their own complicity in racism throughout their interactions with house-elves in the series. Although both contribute to the group oppressing the house-elves, they are able to realize the injustice occurring and make an effort to create change. Harry comes to a personal realization of racism through his growing relationship with Dobby throughout the series in addition to his experiences in mutual mourning with the Black family house-elf, Kreacher (Rowling, 2005). Hermione takes her realizations a step further by

advocating for the rights of the house-elves that she believes are being marginalized. The Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare, S.P.E.W., is created by Hermione in an attempt to use her privilege and power to represent those who are oppressed. Although she is not particularly successful in the endeavor, she is still able to take a social justice approach to anti-racism (Horne, 2010).

Separatist others can be seen throughout the *Harry Potter* series in the centaurs that occasionally appear. Centaurs live in the Forbidden Forest, entirely separated from the wizarding world from which their ultimate goal is not to associate. They even view teaching wizards a treason to their race (Horne, 2010). Firenze, a centaur who agrees to teach at Hogwarts, is banished from the centaur community because "they see this as a betrayal of our kind" (Rowling, 2003, p.1231). When Harry later encounters other centaurs, they described Firenze's exile as having "entered into servitude to humans… there can be no return from such disgrace" (Rowling, 2003, p. 1432). Centaurs suffer from racialization from both the wizards and fellow centaurs even though they are half mystical creature and half human. Throughout the series, it is discovered that centaurs do not have a positive relationship with the Ministry of Magic due to feeling insulted by the label of near-human intelligence (Rowling, 2003). Since their separation, the only information of centaurs in the wizarding world is formulated from stereotypes. This perpetuates the injustice of racism and discrimination as wizards have no interaction to develop individual opinions based on facts and untainted by stereotypes. Centaurs believe that separating themselves entirely is their best way to avoid persecution, but

through avoiding racism, they indirectly suffer. By isolating themselves, there are given the reputation of being "shrouded in mystery" and "mistrustful of wizards" (Rowling, 2009, p. 12). This reputation allows the Ministry of Magic to "instill the belief that the hierarchal relations between human and racial others is natural and proper" (Horne, 2010, para. 44). Little to the knowledge of most wizards, many who do encounter centaurs such as Harry have positive experiences - including having their lives saved (Rowling, 1997). Since there are limited interactions between wizards and centaurs, it is in the best interests of the heads of the wizarding world to incite fear around the group in order to reify their supremacy.

Centaurs suffer racism throughout the series due to their half-human and half-horse composition. It is difficult to categorize them: they are not fully human and not fully horse. They choose to accept oppression from the wizarding world by separating themselves entirely, while other hybrid magical creatures and individuals throughout the *Harry Potter* series do not take this approach. Both Remus Lupin and Hagrid are employed by Hogwarts, and both suffer the consequences of not being the same as everyone else. Professor Lupin became a werewolf after suffering a bite at the age of five, while Hagrid is part giant. Both try to present themselves as human to blend in with societal norms, but because of their unique traits they are not entirely accepted in either "race". Due to the intersectional nature of their identities and oppression, they choose to present themselves as one identity in order to avoid suffering further oppression from more than one source (Tyson, 2006). Dominant cultures, in this

instance the Ministry of Magic, form categories based on the current beliefs at different times which force hybrids to choose the more privileged of their various identities as "race has always been a matter of definition" (Tyson, 2006, p. 372). Though policies at the Ministry of Magic change depending on the mentality of the wizard(s) in charge, the oppression of magical creatures remains constant in the wizarding world.

Conclusion

The application of critical race theory within J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* brings forward the constructed hierarchy and racialization that exists in the series. A hierarchical system is exemplified by the evident levels of inequality and discrimination that various beings are subjected to in both the magical and non-magical worlds. The relationship between wizards, Muggles, and other magical creatures demonstrates Tyson's tenets of critical race: everyday racism, interest convergence, social construction of race, differential racialization, and intersectionality (2006). Underneath the harsh implications of race, critical race theory shows that the foundations for race-based hierarchies are as fictional as the magical world itself. Nonetheless, these hierarchies are created by the privileged group to give power to some and oppress others. Viewing the *Harry Potter* series though the lens of critical race theory (CRT) allows readers to use the texts as a forum to further reconsider the implications of race relations and the effects of racism and racialization at all levels.

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The Power of the Potter Patriarchy: Feminist Theory and *Harry Potter*

Austin Henderson, Madison Kenny, Cameron Lane, Duc Le, & Madison Murray

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series continues to be an increasingly popular series worldwide. The series provides readers the opportunity to become immersed in the wizarding world of Hogwarts and all of its magical features. However, the fantasy also reifies inequality found within gendered discourse. For example, inequality is even noticeable when comparing the number of male and female characters. By the end of the series, there are 201 males portrayed, whereas only 115 females are mentioned (Heilman & Donaldson, 2009, p. 141). Whether it be Cho Chang, the Ravenclaw Quidditch seeker; Hermione, the cleverest witch in her year; Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry; or the Ministry of Magic, the discourse around women in the *Harry Potter* series constructs and reflects inequalities based on gender. Using a poststructural feminist framework, this paper analyzes various aspects of the *Harry Potter* novels and finds that the series acts as an impediment to social progress in terms of gender equality. It also argues that a lack of intersectionality, the presence of harmful gender roles, and normalizing binary gendered discourses all work to reinforce the oppression of women.

Feminist Theory

Feminism is a social movement that has profoundly impacted the daily lives of both men and women by "challenging patriarchy at every turn" (St. Pierre & Pillow, 2002, p. 2). This social concept is frequently divided into three main eras, dating back to

the period of Enlightenment. The first wave of feminism was highly influenced by the well-known works of Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone De Beauvoir. This wave of scholarship and theory, however, focused primarily on achieving equality for women that belonged to privileged demographics, mainly those who were white and from the middle- and upper-class. In Wollstonecraft's (1792) *Vindication on the Rights of Women,* she furthered Rousseau's ideas of democratic equality by stating she desired this to "extend to women" (p. 21). Simone De Beauvoir is renowned for coining the term "Other" when referring to females, and revealed that women become their gender, and are not born into it (Beauvoir, 1949). Overall, the first wave of feminism desired a "natural equality between men and women" (Erbert, 1991, p. 889).

The second wave of feminist thought began to consider the social, cultural, and biological factors that categorized women (Erbert, 1991). After the Second World War, feminist theorist Betty Friedan published the *Feminine Mystique*, and expressed concern with the constant connotation that women belong in the home. Friedan (1963) primarily considered White women, and how they were negatively portrayed in the media and how the notion that they belonged in the home restricted their potential. Along with Friedan, other scholars such as Gloria Steinem and Catherine MacKinnon advanced the second wave of feminism by advocating for getting women out of their homes and for reducing the gender-based objectification. The second wave advanced the advocacy for women, but failed to address the intersectional and socially constructed nature of sex and gender.

Poststructural, or contemporary feminism, on the other hand, seeks to recognize the power relations that renders gender the basis of societal inequalities (Erbert, 1991). Also known as the third wave of feminist thought, it builds on previous scholarship. Poststructural feminists consider the root cause of societal divisions, and believe that gender is one of the key determinants (Erbert, 1991, p. 888). As Scott (1986) states, the specific term "gender" first appeared to "insist on the fundamentally social distinctions" (p. 1054) of females and such discourses are part of the causes of inequalities (Barrett, 2005; St. Pierre & Pillow, 2002; Erbert, 1991). The socially constructed discourses of gender create specific identities, and social pressures force individuals to act accordingly (Barrett, 2005). St. Pierre and Pillow (2002) state that gendered discourse is "overwhelming" (p. 181) and because of its prevalence and pervasiveness, Butler (1990) states that "subjects" cannot be individual agents outside of the social gendered discourses that produce them (Barrett, 2005). According to poststructural feminism, gender inequality is also intersectional. Whereas the first and second waves often assume a universal figure of "woman," third wave feminists such as Hooks (2000) and Crenshaw (1991) point out that this universal "woman" figure often represented a white upper class woman. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) coined the term intersectionality and suggested that individuals who identify with multiple oppressed sociocultural characteristics are far more marginalized. These characteristics can include gender, religion, race, or sexuality. bell hooks (2000) reinforces Crenshaw's arguments by focusing on the perpetuation of marginalization based on the

intersections of race, gender, and classes. Intersectionality is a crucial component of poststructural feminism that continues to reveal the socially constructed nature of gender.

Examining *Harry Potter* using a poststructural feminist lens also reveals a lack of intersectionality. While reading this series, it is noticeable that there are scenarios where women are empowered or are breaking societal stereotypes; however, like in non-magical society, many of these women are not members of other marginalized groups. Additionally, Rowling expresses her characters within a strict binary of either male or female, and perpetuates stereotypes associated with masculinity and femininity that poststructural feminists perceive as causes of gender inequalities. Throughout this paper, the terms male and female are used exclusively as a reflection of the writing within Rowling's publications. However, poststructural feminists recognize that belonging to a sex is "fundamentally impossible" (Butler, 1990, p. 19).

Gender Roles

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, characters are constricted to specific societal roles based on their gender and the expected behavior associated with being male or female (Lindsey, 2015,). When society categorizes people into two genders it prescribes predetermined ways to act. These expected gender roles can be extremely harmful to both men and women because they set forth unrealistic expectations of behaviour. By relying on this binary, Rowling denies the totality of the experiences of women in her book, as well as in non-magical society. As Tyson (2006) explains, authors typically "cast

men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive" (p. 85) and they "cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (p. 85). Gender roles masculinize or feminize certain characteristics, such as not allowing men to display emotion, and shaming them when they do so. When men or women stray from their given roles, they are negatively labeled. Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, the expression of gender roles are particularly noticeable in behaviour such as the undermining of Hermione's intellect, the lack of intersectionality when considering Cho Chang, the sexual perception of Ginny, the focus on motherhood, and the juxtaposition of Harry and Ron.

Femininity

Hermione Granger. Hermione is one of the three protagonists in the *Harry Potter* series. This makes her an ideal candidate through which to analyze the representation of women within the series. Rowling often uses the discourse of rationality to make men seem reasonable and women such as Hermione seem foolish. For instance, after witnessing the mistreatment of house elves at the Quidditch World Cup, Hermione starts the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare (S.P.E.W.). Harry and Ron ridicule Hermione, mocking the society by saying "Hermione – open your ears," (Rowling, 2000, p. 188). These comments targeted at Hermione's creation of S.P.E.W. continue to portray her as irrational, reinforcing female gendered stereotypes. One should also note that Hermione is advocating for house-elves specifically enslaved in a domestic situation, a predominantly female domain. By

portraying the main female character as irrational, Rowling perpetuates the discourse that women are not able to make reasonable decisions.

Despite Hermione being one of the protagonists, she is constantly upstaged by the males in the story. As a female, Hermione is unable to be heroic. She must stay on the sidelines as the males in the series make the noble moves. The male characters are also valorized compared to their female counterparts. As Christine Schoefer said: "No girl is brilliantly heroic the way Harry is, no woman is experienced and wise like Professor Dumbledore" (as cited in Gupta, 2003, p. 127). This suggests that women are incapable of accomplishing more than men, and must always stay in the shadow of their male counterparts.

As the central female character, Hermione Granger is seen as smart but, "only contributes to Harry's adventures and not to her own" (Mikulan, 2009, p. 2). In *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (Rowling, 1999), Hermione is given a magical object called a Time-Turner, which allows for time travel. For the majority of the school year, Hermione uses this device to take extra classes, but then uses it to help Harry save a life. She then returns the device, partly because she recognizes that it was not intended to be shared (Rowling, 1999). This situation is an example of Rowling attempting to keep Harry Potter in a heroic role because he is a male. It also portrays Hermione as giving and selfless, two characteristics that are stereotypically feminine. These gendered social constructions support a belief that females must be smart and rational, and men must be able to perform heroically.

As a female, Hermione often seems weak and fearful. Even though she possesses the knowledge to defeat the troll in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, she finds herself "flat against the wall, her mouth open with terror" (Rowling, 1997, p. 251) when face to face with the beast. In this situation, Ron Weasley is forced to step up and fulfill his stereotypical male duty of being protective, using Hermione's knowledge to defeat the troll: "Ron pulled out his own wand – not knowing what he was going to do" (Rowling, 1997, p. 252). In this scenario, Hermione possesses the skills, but Ron uses this knowledge to defeat the troll. This gives the idea to readers of *Harry Potter* that they must also bow to these gender stereotypes, and fulfill the roles society has assigned them.

Cho Chang. In the *Harry Potter* series, Cho Chang is a Ravenclaw student (Rowling, 1999) and one of Harry's romantic interests. Ravenclaw students are known for their "wit" and "intelligence" (Rowling, 1997, p. 171). Being of Asian descent, Chang is stereotypically characterized as a smart student, presumably because of her race. Although being smart is a positive characteristic that is empowering for women, it continues to oppress this marginalized group by reinforcing the stereotype that the main quality of Asians is their intelligence (Paek & Shah, 2011). Additionally, even though Rowling incorporates characters from marginalized communities, their power is far inferior to the power of many characters of the series. The intensified oppression of those who belong to multiple marginalized groups is demonstrated through the

character of Cho Chang, whose Asian identity, as typified by her intelligence and Sorting, is seen as her defining characteristic.

Throughout the novels, Cho Chang does not have an influential role, except as a love interest for the protagonist. She is known to cry, such as when she kisses Harry in *The Order of the Phoenix.* By showing stereotypically female emotions, Cho Chang is increasingly marginalized as her intersectional identity coincide with the stereotypes that are associated to these feminine actions. Hermione explains Cho's situation by saying, "I expect she's feeling confused because she liked Cedric and now she likes Harry, and she can't work out who she likes best" (Rowling, 2003, p. 783). Cho's confusion and sadness because of her boy issues disempowers her as other characters assume she is unable to make rational decisions. Since Cho Chang is not a protagonist, she has less power than other females such as Hermione. This, in combination with other characteristics attributed to her, continues to reveal that intersectional women are increasingly oppressed compared to their White counterparts. Depicting Cho as a woman of an ethnic minority and subsequently disempowering her by associating negative stereotypes with her character, such as generalizing her intelligence, calls into question the intersectionality of Rowling's work. Characters like Cho Chang normalize the increased marginalization of intersectional women.

Ginny Weasley. Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, Harry develops an attraction towards Ginny Weasley. Ginny is Arthur and Molly Weasley's youngest child, and only daughter. The Weasley's become Harry's pseudo-family throughout the novels,

and are key members of the Order of the Phoenix, a resistance organization fighting against Voldemort. Ginny is introduced in the first book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997). It quickly becomes apparent that Ginny has romantic feelings for Harry. Their relationship begins as a crush, but as the series progresses, so do Harry's feelings for Ginny. However, Ginny's feelings are only validated when they are returned by the object of her affection, Harry Potter.

Early in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, 2010), Harry and Ginny's feelings of attraction come to a head; "...and then she was kissing him as she had never kissed him before, and Harry was kissing her back, and it was blissful oblivion" (p. 99). Shortly after this romantic escapade, Ginny's brother, Ron, bursts into the room. Ron is there "to remind Harry of his duties and the grim work ahead" (Cherland, 2014, p. 277). Ginny is viewed as a distraction, interrupting Harry's important journey to fight Voldemort. The fate of the wizarding world is at peril because of a silly girl! The story then turns to a rational man, Ron Weasley, to save the day. Ron convinces Harry to overcome his desires for Ginny in order to be successful in his war against evil (Rowling, 2010).

Ginny Weasley is yet another example of a depiction of female characters as innocent, unaware, and just another hurdle for the man to overcome. She is viewed as an object that can be simply pushed aside for later. Scott (1986) explains how the discourses of gender have specific meanings. She indicates that individuals have different identities, and by portraying females as obstacles and distractions, these

specific binary identities perpetuate gender inequality within the series (Scott, 1986). This divide supports and upholds outdated and gendered notions that much of society still endorses (Cherland, 2014, p. 277).

Masculinity

Tyson (2006) explains that gender roles frequently influence men by "[dictating] that [they] are supposed to be strong" (p. 87). Throughout the series, this gender role can be seen by comparing Harry Potter and Ron Weasley. Because of his gender, Harry Potter is taught to suppress his emotions and show that he is strong. For example, when Harry spends nights sitting in front of the Mirror of Erised, which shows him together with his parents, whom he lost when he was just a baby, he experiences "the most desperate desire of [his] heart" (Rowling, 1997). Through the parallel of Ron Weasley, Harry is made to feel shameful for this emotional situation being his biggest desire. When Ron looks into the mirror, he sees an appropriate 'manly' image to express his desire of being a sports team captain (Rowling, 1997). The contrasting experiences of Ron and Harry reveal that Ron meets the gender role of being "physically powerful and emotionally stoic" (Tyson, 2006, p. 87), whereas Harry does not portray these roles. These masculine gender roles in *Harry Potter* can impact readers who can potentially express these stereotyped gender roles themselves. According to Kaufman (1987), masculinity is directly correlated to increases in violence against women. By "becoming part of [their] gender," (p. 7) boys such as Harry and Ron are susceptible to

reinforcing their masculinity through physical dominance against women, in accordance with the "socially imposed" (p. 6) aspects of this gender role (Kaufman, 1987).

However, Harry's atypical performance of masculinity can also be seen as one of the strengths of Rowling's series. Harry's sensitive and emotional nature eventually becomes his key power within the series. His capacity for emotion, to show, feel, and receive love separates him from his antagonist, Lord Voldemort. This atypical masculinity becomes Harry's strength, which ultimately helps him triumph over Voldemort.

Motherhood

The *Harry Potter* series places an extreme importance on motherhood, "present[ing] women primarily as wives and mothers" (Gallardo & Smith, 2003, p. 192). Harry idealizes his own mother, Lily Potter, who made the ultimate sacrifice for her son. Even though she is absent from his life throughout the entire series, Harry still is very much in love with his mother, or simply the idea of his mother. This expression of motherhood reflects Harry's internalization of stereotypical gender roles and therefore continues their dramatic effect in this series.

Motherhood is also idealized in homemaker Molly Weasley, and Harry's dismissal of his aunt, Petunia Dursley, with whom Harry lives after his parents are murdered by Voldemort, as a bad mother figure. Through the use of many characters, including Molly Weasley and Lily Potter, "the text implies that the primary role of women in society is the care, socialization, and education of men *at any cost"* (Gallardo

& Smith, 2003, p. 193, emphasis in original). Readers exposed to the generalizations of gender roles in relation to motherhood in the series will be subject to believing that the role of women is exclusively to care for children.

One can see many situations within the popular *Harry Potter* series that reinforce stereotypes based on the idea of binary genders. By choosing to express certain gender roles, Rowling continues systemic oppression, particularly of women. Rowling's expression of gender roles in this series can be read as reifying oppressive stereotypes, as her characters abide by specific roles that are only portrayed in males and females. Including characters in *Harry Potter* that do not necessarily follow strict gender constructions could help make the series more reflective of the diversity of gender expressions.

Gender Discourse

Discourses are patterns of "public and private language" (p. 275) that shape perspectives and social identities (Cherland, 2014). Postmodern discourse of gender suggests that humans subjective perception of themselves is constantly changing due to the socially constructed notions of gender. In *Harry Potter*, Rowling continues to portray heteronormativity, which is an aspect of typical gender discourse that can marginalize women. Pugh & Wallace (2006) explain that heteronormativity "establishes a tension," and "bears the potential to harm women… whether they are gay or straight, pre-sexual or post-sexual, sexually innocent, or sexually experienced" (p. 262). In essence, this heteronormativity "reinscribes the problematic heterosexual/homosexual

binary" and "stigmatizes sexual queerness" that contributes to the narrowing range of acceptable behaviors for women (Pugh & Wallace, 2006, p. 262).

As previously discussed, these gender discourses often portray women as irrational, whereas men are portrayed as being of sound mind. This example, also present throughout Rowling's series, is another reason male and females are perceived as binary opposites in society. These incorporations in the *Harry Potter* series normalize the notion that women are subjects. The discourse of gender in *Harry Potter* is present within characters such as the Veela, and the dominance of male characters in instances such as the hierarchical construction of Hogwarts. Foucault explains how the systems in place within society create this idea of "subjects", and these are examples of the societal pressures within the *Harry Potter* series that reinforces this process (as cited in Butler, 1990, p. 2).

Rationality

Readers are first introduced to the Veela in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000). Veela are semi-human, magical creatures in the form of young, beautiful women (Rowling, 2000). These creatures are similar to the Sirens of *The Odyssey*, characters derived from Greek mythology. The Sirens lived on a remote island, surrounded by cliffs and rocks. Sailors would be lured to the island by the Sirens enchanting singing, only to meet their demise on the rocky coastline (Homer & Fitzgerald, 1990). Much like the Sirens, the Veela possess dangerous, seductive powers that entice men into doing their bidding. Even the heroic Harry Potter cannot resist the

sexual temptations put forth by the Veela. This approach to feminism perceives females as different from regular 'normal' people by suggesting that they possess dark and dangerous sexual powers over men. In doing so, females are "Othered" from their male counterparts. The process of "Othering" was an instrumental aspect of feminist theorist Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) *The Second Sex,* and continues to oppress women by secluding them from men.

The Veela represent just one example of the interactions between genders that are aspects of the gender discourse. Another character, Fleur Delacour, provides a clear depiction of this relationship. Delacour is a competitor in the Triwizard Tournament, representing her school: the Beauxbatons Academy of Magic. In French, "beau" translates to beautiful and much like the prefix of her school name, Fleur embodies the female ideals of beauty and grace, and is part-Veela. On the other hand, her male counterpart, Viktor Krum, from the Durmstrang Institute, embodies male stereotypes of strength and recklessness. These characters are the result of systemic, subjective views of gender roles which they are in turn reinforcing. Similar to non-magical society, gender roles of dominance and passivity is oppressive to women as they are often unable to perform outside of their socially constructed expectations.

Discriminatory Discourse

Davies and Banks (1992) divide the narrative of gender into two categories; the equity discourse and the gender-discriminatory discourse. Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, Rowling reveals both discriminatory and equity discourses in her revelations of

male dominance and gender equality. In terms of gender-discriminatory discourse, Heilman and Donaldson (2009) suggest that the series can be read in ways that "reveal dominance and hegemonic conventions" (p. 140).

Throughout the *Harry Potter* series, readers also notice a dominance of men, and absence of women in the decision-making process within the hierarchical Ministry of Magic and at Hogwarts school. The dominance of men in positions of power supports Tyson's (2006) argument that "the belief that men are superior to women has been used…[to] maintain the male monopoly of positions" (p. 86). The lack of female representatives in the political realm outside of this series continues to be a topic of discussion for modern feminists. Pugh & Wallace (2006) continue to explain this concept within the series by stating that:

> Women hold positions of power in the Ministry of Magic and at Hogwarts, [although] the top positions in each institution are currently held by men and even the British Prime Minister, who makes a cameo appearance in *Half-Blood Prince,* is male.

Readers can also note the role of Umbridge, who acts as agent for Cornelius Fudge, Minister for Magic, and Professor McGonagall, who, as deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts, acts as Dumbledore's second-in-command. Despite holding power within the institution, the actions of McGonagall and Umbridge are exercised under the guidance of men. Umbridge always utilizes the name and influence of the Minister to defend and support her authority and decisions at Hogwarts. This is noticeable when, in *The Order*

of the Phoenix, she refuses to be overruled by Professor McGonagall and requests more power (Rowling, 2003, p. 777). In *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* McGonagall showed that her decisions were made with the influence of men when she expressed her concerns of the delivery of infant Harry and she chooses to follow Dumbledore's plan despite initially disagreeing with him (Rowling, 1997). Furthermore, in *Harry Potter The Goblet of Fire,* McGonagall is silenced by her male counterparts, Dumbledore and Fudge, as Voldemort rises to power (Rowling, 2000). According to Heilman & Donaldson (2009), this political dominance reveals the type of "powerlessness" (p. 155) that females are forced to overcome in the series. These aspects of the novels normalize the connotation that women are unable to make their own executive decisions and even when in positions of power, men dictate their decisions. By standardizing a lacking presence of women in Harry Potter, the increasing need for women in the public office will not be met. By portraying limited numbers of women in positions of power in such popular literature, readers can be persuaded that this is normal and how non-magical society should be.

Equity Discourse

Throughout Rowling's series, and particularly in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (Rowling, 2005) and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Rowling, 2000), the division (and lack thereof) between genders demonstrates an opposing discourse, the gender equity discourse. Certain aspects of these novels can be perceived as more equitable since women and men are not as segregated, nor are women as marginalized

as other aspects of the series. Since the equity discourse does not discriminate based on gender, one example of this narrative is present within Rowling's portrayals of Hogwarts.

In the United Kingdom, most boarding schools are single-sex (Schaverien, 2004, p. 687). However, Hogwarts includes both genders within their school. This inclusion demonstrates that Rowling included an aspect of equity discourse as opposed to exclusively male dominance. Additionally, Rowling revealed another aspect of the equity discourse by portraying Quidditch teams that consisted of both male and female players. In fact, in *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (2005), they do not only refer to Ginny as a teammate on the Quidditch team, but they praise her skills, therefore allowing readers to be assured that she is a good player (p. 177). Rowling is revealing support for equity discourses and countering the stereotypical gender divides by integrating boys and girls in the same school and on the same sports teams.

The contrast of the equity discourse and gender-discriminatory discourse relating to male dominance is evident when comparing the series by Rowling and the series of films released by Warner Brothers Corporation. In *The Goblet of Fire,* the Triwizard tournament takes place and consists of Hogwarts, the Durmstrang Institute and the Beauxbatons Academy of Magic. In the cinematic version, both schools are portrayed as single-sex: Durmstrang for boys and Beauxbatons for girls. The different narrative portrayed in the films supports the gender-discriminatory discourse and provides viewers the opportunity to see the male characters as dominant. On the

contrary, in Rowling's books, all three schools are co-ed. Upon the arrival of the Beauxbatons in the *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* Rowling writes, "Harry, whose attention had been focused completely on Madame Maxine now noticed that about a dozen boys and girls, all, by the look of them, in their late teens, had emerged from the carriage…" (Rowling, 2000, p. 352). The representation of the Triwizard schools as single-gendered in the films portrays the normalization of gender division. Despite still having gender inequalities within the co-ed schools and sports teams throughout the book(s), Rowling attempts to counter the gendered normalization of the British boarding school system. This is an example of the equity discourse, but does not outweigh the other oppressive aspects of this series.

These discourses in Rowling's series are problematic for readers. Even in the equity discourse, it is evident that Rowling's writing oppresses certain individuals by only including two binary genders at Hogwarts. Those who read her series could believe that these discourses are normal, and therefore do not recognize the reality that gender is socially constructed by such discourses. For instance, certain readers may see themselves in the text and feel obligated to conform to specific binary gender roles, whereas a queer or gender non-conforming reader may feel marginalized since Rowling fails to incorporate these people in her writing.

Conclusion

J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series will forever be world-renowned. However, it is important to be critical of its normalization of oppressive behaviors against women. By

looking at the series through a poststructural feminist lens, it is evident that as Pugh & Wallace state, “children are harmed by the male and female stereotypes developed in traditional literature” (p. 263). Readers become accustomed to the binary expressions of gender in Rowling’s series, which can contribute to gender inequality. The lack of intersectional characters, presence of harmful gender roles, and the gendered discourses that these novels contain often go unnoticed, and, without challenge, this insidiousness can contribute to a perpetuation of gender inequality. Despite its popularity, the *Harry Potter* series continues to reinforce the oppression of women, impeding social progress when it comes to gender equality.

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Psychoanalytic Theory: Harry Potter, Voldemort, and the Oedipus Complex

Sarah Dale, Erin Lawton, Chantelle Masterson, & Mallory Murphy

Psychoanalysis is the study of root causes of human behaviour, originally founded by neurologist and psychotherapist Sigmund Freud. For over a century, psychoanalysis has been a crucial conceptual and theoretical framework for psychologists and it has proven to be a popular and controversial topic. Psychoanalysis is now used as a literary technique to analyze the behaviours of characters and to better understand underlying plot devices (Tyson, 2006, p. 14). Tyson (2006) states that authors often subconsciously incorporate psychoanalytic elements into their writing (p.11). J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, one of the most successful book series ever, encompasses many examples of psychoanalytic theory which can be analyzed through the close examination of its characters. Throughout the series, two common psychoanalytic frames emerge; Freud's Oedipus complex and theories of abandonment. This paper will focus on the two main characters that drive the narrative – the protagonist Harry Potter and the antagonist Voldemort. Both present strong psychoanalytic tendencies related to many of Freud's conceptual thoughts around parental attachment, primarily the Oedipus complex. This will be shown by first introducing the Oedipus complex and its origin, then relating this to both Harry and Voldemort.

Oedipus Complex Background

The “oedipal conflict”, better known as the Oedipus complex, is a psychoanalytic theory that is based on a child’s relationship with their parents (Tyson, 2006, p. 14). Rhona Fear (2015) explained that a child will have a subconscious, innate obsession with the parent of opposite sex and form feelings of possession and sexual desire towards them. This leads the child to feel hostile toward their same sex parent who is seen as a rival (Fear, 2015, p. 15). The child perceives the rival parent as on obstacle in the way of their original love, the parent of the opposite sex: “For a time these two relationships proceed side by side, until the boy's sexual wishes in regard to his mother become more intense and his father is perceived as an obstacle to [him]; from this the Oedipus complex originates” (Freud, 1923, p. 27). The child may then wish to defeat and take the place of their rival parent (Tyson, 2006, p. 14).

The Oedipus complex is based on *Oedipus Rex,* a Greek tragedy written by Sophocles (442 BEC). The play describes the life of a man named Oedipus and centers around the incestual relationship he unknowingly develops with his mother. When Oedipus was born, an oracle appeared to his parents and presented them with a prophecy which stated that Oedipus would one day kill his father and marry his mother (Knox, 1998). Alarmed, Oedipus’s parents left him in the woods to die. He was then found by a woman named Merope who raised him in a nearby city.

One fateful day Oedipus heard word of his prophecy, causing him to flee from his adoptive parents believing them to be the ones the prophecy was referring to (Knox, 1998). On the road, he ran into a man and ultimately ended up killing him. Once he

arrived in a new city, he married a widowed woman. It turns out that the man on the road was, in fact, his biological father, and the widowed woman he married was his biological mother. Freud derived the Oedipus complex theory from Oedipus's prophecy (Knox, 1998). This led to the creation of Freud's complex "in which children long for an exclusive relationship with the parent of the opposite sex. The desire for such a relationship necessarily involves the wish to displace the same sex parent" (Anatol, 2003, p. 17). Freud argues that this is unavoidable and an individual's future sexual partners will adhere to the characteristics of the parent of opposite sex (Freud, 1925, p. 1749). They will also aim to become like their same sex parent and be in constant competition to gain the affections of their opposite sex parent (Freud, 1923, p.27).

As Tyson (2006) discusses in *Critical Theory Today* psychoanalysis can be used as a lens to better understand the underlying themes and character behaviours present in books. Through analysis of the *Harry Potter* novels, the Oedipus complex can be seen in the unconscious minds of both Harry, the protagonist, and Voldemort, the antagonist. In Harry, Oedipal desire is found in two object attachments: his biological mother and magic. In Voldemort, the complex can be seen by comparing him to the story of *Oedipus Rex* and by analyzing his hatred of non-magic individuals.

Harry Potter: Oedipus Complex

Harry Potter is subconsciously driven by the Oedipus complex. His actions and behaviours directly correlate with Freud's theory that a son will desire his mother and

wish to become like his father (Anatol, 2003, p. 18). Freud explains this stating, "the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him" (Freud, 1923, p. 27). In the novels, Harry's mother figure can be represented by both Lily Potter and magic. Both are prominent objects in Harry's life that he desires to possess. In the traditional sense of the complex, Harry subconsciously desires his mother and develops relationships with those like her. He simultaneously desires to possess strong magic powers, which can represent a metaphoric mother figure because, according to the Oedipus complex, the object of desire can be any object an individual has "obsessional feelings about possessing" (Fear, 2015, p.3).

In the first three novels, Harry displays a strong idolization of his biological mother, often hearing her voice in moments of despair and expressing a desire for her presence. This demonstrates Freud's theory that a son will develop strong attachments and desire for their mother figure (Freud, 1963, p. 248). Moreover, in J. K. Rowling's (1997) first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, Harry visits the Mirror of Erised. This mirror does not show an individual their reflection, but rather an image of their utmost desire. When Harry looks into the mirror he sees his parents, with his mother, Lily, as the primary focus. There is a strong emphasis on her eyes, Harry thinking "her eyes - her eyes just like mine [...] [b]right green - exactly the same shape" (Rowling, 1997, p. 153). This is Harry's only physical connection with his mother and demonstrates his need to feel connected with her through any medium. Just as Freud discusses in the Oedipus complex, Harry desires his mother, so much so that she

appears in a mirror that is solely constructed to show an individual their greatest desire (Rowling, 1997, p. 157).

Harry's attachment to his mother has also saved his life on many occasions. During the first novel, it is revealed by the headmaster of the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Dumbledore, that the reason Harry was able to survive Voldemort's attack as a child was because his mother died to save him (Rowling, 1997, p. 216). She did this by shielding Harry from the Avada Kedavra death curse cast by Voldemort, in an attempt to kill Harry. Due to her sacrifice and unconditional love, Lily protects Harry by creating a shield that disables Voldemort's ability to harm Harry, which continues to protect him (Rowling, 1997, p. 216). Dumbledore explains this to Harry saying:

> Your mother died to save you, if there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves it own mark […] to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever (Rowling, 1997, p.216).

The scar that Harry carries on his forehead, a result of Voldemort's attempt to kill him, is a physical representation of the love between Harry and his mother. Harry obsesses over the idea that his mother died to save him because in his mind it solidifies the idea that there is a mutual attachment between the two, further driving his Oedipus

complex. As Freud discusses, having a loving caretaker creates an attachment that the child then aims to preserve throughout their entire life (Tyson, 2006, p.14). Lily being willing to die for Harry shows the love that surrounded him as a child, continuing his desire for her. This desire for his mother is unattainable because it is taboo for a child to develop incestual relationships with their parents (Freud, 2003, p. 16). Due to his inability to possess his mother, Harry then seeks a romantic relationship with an individual like her in order to fulfill this desire in a socially acceptable way.

The individual that Harry parallels with his mother is his best friend's sister, Ginny Weasley. Both Lily and Ginny are described as having red hair, a direct physical similarity between the two (Rowling, 1997, p. 69, 153). Freud would argue that this allows Harry to create a physical connection with his mother through Ginny (Tyson, 2006, p. 15). Ginny also demonstrates many behavioral similarities with Lily. In J. K. Rowling's (2004) novel *Harry Potter and the Order of Phoenix*, Ginny befriends Luna Lovegood. Luna is seen as an outcast by her peers often being called "Looney Lovegood" (Rowling, 2004, p. 168). This friendship is parallel to Lily's childhood friendship with Severus Snape, a professor and former student at Hogwarts. At Hogwarts, Snape was outcast by his peers, much like Luna (Rowling, 2007, p. 540). Lily remained friends with Snape despite the opinions of her classmates (Rowling, 2007, p. 539). This shows that Lily and Ginny share similar characteristics which drives Harry's attraction to the former. Harry's relationship with Ginny fulfills the theory of the

Oedipus complex that an individual will develop romantic relationships with those who are similar to their desired parent (Tyson, 2006, p. 14).

Harry, Magic, and Voldemort

The Oedipus complex is also metaphorically present within Harry's relationship with magic. Analyzing this relationship using psychoanalysis allows an individual to better understand the motives behind Harry's behaviours (Tyson, 2006, p. 13). As previously stated, according to the Oedipus complex, the object of desire can be anything that an individual has "obsessional feelings of possessing" (Fear, 2015, p. 3). This describes Harry's desire to become a powerful wizard. Voldemort possesses the level of magic that Harry covets, making him the father figure that Harry must compete with; thus, forcing their rivalry.

After Harry finds out that he is a wizard, the wizarding world and magic become an obsession, much like the Oedipus complex describes the child's obsession with their opposite sex parent (Fear, 2015, p.15). Harry longs to possess this magic and competes with Voldemort who already holds it, just as a child is in competition with their father for their mother's love and attention (Anatol, 2003, p. 18). Voldemort is a more powerful wizard than Harry and possesses the magic Harry desires. This is much like the father who possesses the mother's affection which the son desires (Freud, 1923, p. 27). Freud discusses that the only way a child can achieve the desired affections of their

mother is to become like their father (Anatol, 2003, p. 18). Harry wishes to become like Voldemort in the sense that he desires to be a powerful wizard.

Harry's desire to possess powerful magic is shown when he begs a professor at his school to teach him an expert spell that "many qualified wizards have difficulty with" (Rowling, 2000, p. 176). Voldemort demonstrates that he possesses strong magic by almost taking over the wizarding world (Rowling, 1997, p. 62). This causes Harry to view Voldemort as a rival because he has the magic Harry desires. The only way that Harry can possess the magic abilities that he wants is to defeat Voldemort. According to the Oedipus complex, in order for the child to obtain the mother's full affection, there must no longer be any obstacles in their way, meaning that the father figure must be eliminated, allowing the child to take their place (Freud, 1923, p. 27).. Harry completes his Oedipus complex when he defeats Voldemort during their final battle in the last novel of the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Rowling, 2007). By defeating his rival, Harry is no longer faced with an obstacle between him and the object he desires: magic.

Harry's ability to reach his full potential is displayed by his ability to possess the Elder Wand, one of the most powerful wands in the wizarding world. The Elder Wand is described as "the Wand of Destiny, the Deathstick" (Rowling, 2007, p. 526). Possessing the most powerful wand in the wizarding world represents Harry completely harnessing his magic abilities. With his victory, Harry gets what he has been longing to possess for years and can reach his full potential as a powerful wizard. He has stolen strong magical

powers from the figure that previously held them, much like Freud said a son must steal his mother's affection away from his father (Anatol, 2003, p. 18). Ultimately, Harry's decision to destroy the Elder Wand speaks to his rejection of the rivalry and comparisons between him and Voldemort.

Voldemort: Oedipus Complex

Harry is not the only character in the series who is affected by his subconscious Oedipal desires. Voldemort also possesses this complex. By analyzing Voldemort through the lens of psychoanalysis, the behaviours he displays can be better understood (Tyson, 2006, p. 13). Voldemort's subconscious Oedipus complex can be seen through a direct comparison to the tale of *Oedipus Rex* as well as an analysis of his core abandonment issues.

First, both Voldemort and Oedipus were not raised by their biological parents. In the case of Oedipus, he unknowingly found a new family, however Voldemort was left as an orphan (Rowling, 2006, p. 202). What may seem as a difference between the two characters is, in fact, a considerable similarity. Whether aware of it or not, this abandonment affects the circumstance of their upbringing and unconscious minds. Oedipus's abandonment led to him being raised separated from his biological parents. This ultimately led to Oedipus's tragedy and his prophecy coming true. Voldemort's abandonment caused more unconscious damage and, like Oedipus, ultimately led to his tragedy and death.

Moreover, the two characters are both handed tragic prophecies. Oedipus's prophecy is that he will one day kill his father and marry his mother (Knox, 1998). . Voldemort's prophecy states that "the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches… […] …and either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives" (Rowling, 2004, p. 741). This prophecy claims that there is another wizard with the potential to be powerful enough to vanquish Voldemort. Therefore, both characters receive tragic and fateful prophecies that will ultimately lead to their suffering.

Furthermore, both characters attempt to escape from their prophecies. Once Oedipus hears of his prophecy, he assumes that it is referring to his adoptive parents (Knox, 1998). Therefore, he decides to leave in order to separate himself from his parents (Knox, 1998). After Voldemort heard word of his prophecy, "he set out to kill [Harry] when [he] w[as] still a baby, believing he was fulfilling the terms of the prophecy" (Rowling, 2004, p. 740). However, both of their efforts failed and backfired. When Oedipus ran from his adoptive parents, he ended up killing his biological father and marrying his biological mother (Knox, 1998). Voldemort's attempt to kill Harry as a child only led to his defeat in J. K. Rowling's (2007) final novel *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*.

Finally, almost as if J. K. Rowling was purposefully drawing attention to the similarities between the two characters, the name of Oedipus's adoptive mother is Merope (Knox, 1998) which is also the name of Voldemort's mother (Rowling, 2006, p.

246). Whether it is their abandonment at birth, tragic prophecies or their mothers' identical names, Voldemort and Oedipus are analogous to one another. Due to a number of similarities between Voldemort and Oedipus, and because Freud's Oedipus complex is based on *Oedipus Rex*, Oedipal desires can be seen within Voldemort.

Oedipus, as previously discussed, was given to a caring home and this impacted his future behaviour. Voldemort, on the other hand, was sent to an orphanage where he was unable to develop an attachment with a caretaker. This lack of attachment caused Voldemort to develop abnormal and violent behaviour. This is revealed by one of the workers at the orphanage stating "he's a funny boy […] he was a funny baby too. He hardly ever cried, you know. And then, when he got a little older, he was…odd [...] He scares the other children" (Rowling, 2006, p. 250). Voldemort's abusive behaviour is then further described by Dumbledore, who was a professor at Hogwarts when Voldemort attended, stating "[...] they were not the random experiments typical of young wizards: He was already using magic against other people, to frighten, to punish, to control" (Rowling, 2006, p. 259).

In psychoanalysis, Freud explains that childhood attachments and relationships affect how individuals will behave later in life and the relationships they will develop (Tyson, 2006, p. 14). Voldemort is a perfect example of this as he had no access to a loving caretaker as a child (Rowling, 2006, p. 202). This, as Freud argued, would have led to attachment disorder later in life (Tyson, 2006, p. 14). This means Voldemort would have an inability to develop loving relationships and understand the pain suffered

by others; he would be incapable of empathy. His incapability to develop relationships due to abandonment and abuse are what allowed him to become the most feared wizard in the wizarding world. His previous familial relationships have left him scarred and able to harm others.

It must also be noted that the orphanage in which Voldemort was placed consisted of non-wizards, also known as Muggles (Rowling, 2006, p. 202). This poor initial relationship with Muggles is in part what drives Voldemort to seek a pure-blood world of wizards. This is a classic case of displacement. Freud defined displacement as having anger towards one particular object or person but then blaming others (Tyson, 2006, p. 15). Voldemort is angry at the mistreatment he endured in his childhood and displaces this on all Muggles as opposed to understanding that it was only that particular orphanage that harmed him. His hatred of Muggles and Muggle-borns is only a defense mechanism used so that he does not have to deal with the abuse he was subjected to as a child. Defense mechanisms are described as "the processes by which the contents of our unconscious are kept in our unconscious. In other words, they are the processes by which we keep the repressed repressed in order to avoid knowing what we feel we can't handle knowing" (Tyson, 2006, p. 15).

Voldemort's drive to exterminate Muggles also directly connects to his relationship with his father. Voldemort's father was a rich Muggle man. When his mother became pregnant with him, his father abandoned them (Rowling, 2006, p. 244). Voldemort's mother died during childbirth. As discussed in the Oedipus complex,

the son will have the desire to kill his father and have relations with his mother (Tyson, 2006, p. 14). Knowing little about his father other than that he is a Muggle, Voldemort then sets off to kill his absent father figure by killing all Muggles and Muggle-borns. It can be seen that Voldemort's drive to take over the wizarding world and create a solely pure-blood race, is based on his desire to kill his father figure. By having no defining characteristic of his father other than the fact that he is a Muggle, Voldemort sees his father figure in all Muggles and thus sets out to kill them.

Conclusion

Through analysis of the protagonist, Harry, and the antagonist, Voldemort, it is evident that the *Harry Potter* series incorporates strong psychoanalytic tendencies relating to Freud's theories of parental attachments. This largely incorporates the Oedipus complex, abandonment, and defense mechanisms. The novels encompass numerous examples of psychoanalytic theory through the actions and behaviours of the characters. Tyson (2006) explains that literature can be viewed through many different critical lenses, such as psychoanalysis, to develop a deeper understanding of the behaviour of the characters and underlying plot devices (p. 7). This may be done intentionally or unintentionally by the author (Tyson, 2006, p. 7). The *Harry Potter* series encompasses many examples of psychoanalytic theory which can be seen through the close examination of its main characters, Harry and Voldemort.

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Conclusion

This volume's essays are the result of trying to incorporate young adult fiction in a university classroom focused on critical thinking and social justice. We have used fiction in our classroom for three years now and each year we learn a little more about what works and what doesn't. In the past, we have chosen books with a more direct focus on challenging inequality, which students saw as didactic or prescriptive. Using *Harry Potter,* we found that students were able to achieve a broader application of knowledge, perhaps due to the cultural familiarity of the book series (even for students who hadn't read all seven books), and the fact that the series was not written specifically to demonstrate any of the critical theories we discussed. Using a more 'generic' text allowed students to see the applications of the different critical and theoretical lenses to texts outside the *Potter* series including other books they read, media they consume, and even the stories and narratives they used to make sense of their own lives. This broader application also helped to dispel the idea that popular texts are beyond critique or that their value is purely for entertainment. Instead of hyper focusing on the "Other" by using texts and works that explicitly reference issues of Otherness such as racism, ableism, and sexism, a critical reading of the Potter series demonstrates the importance of critiquing literature that is often seen as "benign" as we can begin to unpack how these fictional narratives can perpetuate or challenge dominant and oppressive ideologies. By re-reading the Potter series through different critical lenses, the students were able to see how the story was imbued with our own

social and cultural norms and how those norms can be problematic when, for instance, they proliferate gender inequality.

As instructors, we also learn from our students and the critical readings they produce. The social justice approach we take in our classroom calls on us as educators and as individuals to look at our work critically and thoughtfully. Doing class assignments like this helps us to see where we might be stuck in potentially problematic narratives about teaching and learning, and about literature, particularly related to race, ethnicity, epistemology, and colonial privilege. This year, in particular, as we discussed using *Harry Potter* as the investigated text, we wrestled with our whiteness and where we are located as white instructors teaching a class of predominantly white students about social justice work via a book written by a white woman, featuring mostly white characters, and focusing on white culture (even if the world she has constructed is magical).

Our thinking around this project has led us to conclude that using dominant white narratives have an important place in social justice and literary work, because doing so results in us "collecting our people[1]" by demanding they step up and recognize we need to take responsibility and take action without demanding minority groups do the educational work themselves.. However, we are left with critical questions that need to be asked in order to ensure teaching about inequality through whiteness does not

[1] A phrase often used in online POC activism to refer to the need for white people who understand how harmful white supremacy is to stand up against racism instead of relying on POC to do that work for us.

reinforce oppressiveness. For instance, how do we ensure the Other does not become yet another object of study, or a mystical or magical creature, externalized and distant? Does using a character like Harry Potter, a fictional, magical character, help in alleviating this as opposed to using a book with non-white characters written by a non-white person? Or is this a "safe" option because it does not risk as much in terms of discomfort? As we continue to work with our students through issues of social justice, empathy, and action, we will continue to ask ourselves these questions, seeking not answers but guidance towards a more equitable, impactful, and just curriculum.

As we move forward, we want to think about who our students see reflected in the texts we use in the classroom. In using *Harry Potter*, do they see themselves? Primarily white people? Or, by complicating the narrative, have we allowed them to see better versions of themselves who are capable of disrupting their readings of these narratives and of the narratives they create for themselves? Most of the work done on critical children's literature focuses on including multicultural texts to introduce students to less familiar narratives. This project contributes to an extension of this work, looking at how the use of dominant narratives can work in social justice classrooms.

The use of critical theory through literature helps students make a connection between the critique of fictional narratives and the narratives that construct themselves and the world around them. In many ways, this year's literature project was not really about *Harry Potter* or about literature at all. It was about guiding students to be more critical of the powerful stories that construct their lives and our world (Kumashiro,

2015), and to give them tools to interrupt those stories and rewrite them in different and anti-oppressive ways. The use of a variety of critical lenses exposes students to the idea that there are multiple ways to read a text, and that different people may experience those texts in different ways based on their social positioning. Drawing on the work of theorists like Gee (2014), Bhabha (1994), and Hall (1993), we demonstrated that texts can have multiple layers and can be decoded based on the lens from which they are read and experienced. In addition, we wanted the students to learn that these encodings and decodings are not benign as they are cultural products that work to inform the way we understand and interpret our world. .

The *Harry Potter* project is one example of the pedagogy we use in our classroom overall: an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning social justice. Using interdisciplinary projects gives students multiple applications for the theoretical understandings they gain, knowledge that is supported by scholarly research and writing, applications in literature and other media, and experiential opportunities for practice. It is our hope that these perspectives and applications result in students reading their own lives and narratives differently, resulting in more equitable and informed social justice work in the future.

This project is part of a larger pedagogical "bricolage" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1999; Kincheloe, 2001), a curriculum and pedagogy which brings together a variety of theoretical models and concepts on a year-long educational journey to help students question their assumptions and prior knowledge. This project is but one piece of the

tapestry, and that tapestry looks and feels different for every student. By allowing students to shape their own journey, but providing 'guideposts' along the way through readings (scholarly, fictional, (auto)biographical, and multiple medias), we hope to move our predominantly white students from a more normative understanding of 'benevolence and help' (Spivak, 1994) which often replicates oppressive ideologies and practices towards a more nuanced intersectional approach where whiteness is made apparent and challenged. There is no final product or goal to be reached; the journey in itself is the goal. Like Harry's quest for a more equitable world, we hope students build on the knowledge they gain each step of the way, and see the journey as a lifelong opportunity for learning and growth, and maybe with a little magic along the way.

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