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SOCIAL CATEGORIZATION OF OP ED DISCOURSE IN HARRY POTTER

BY

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University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the process of social categorization present in the public discourse surrounding the *Harry Potter* phenomenon as a piece of convergent media. The study's research questions asked which social categories were present in op-ed treatments of the topic, how each category is perceived, and which major strategies are used in relation to those perceived categories. Research questions were addressed with discourse analysis of op-ed pieces from large circulation mass media articles. It found the social categories of child and adult fans, casual readers, non-participators, stewards and commentators. These social categories were shown to fit together to represent membership categorization devices. Rules and boundaries created by those devices influenced authors' claimed self-identities.

Chapter One

Introduction

Rationale.

J.K. Rowling's books about the boy hero *Harry Potter* and the subsequent franchise that has sprung up around them are a cultural phenomenon. *Harry Potter* is characterized not only by widespread influence but also by a rapid rise to fame. The series began in 1997, with the publication of the first book *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* by the UK publishers Bloomsbury. The fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire,* broke all sales records in the first weekend. Every book in the seven book series following broke the record when they went on sale including the last book *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, which was published a decade later and is now the fastest selling book in history (scholastic.com, 2010). Beyond the millions of children who have read the series, millions more of all ages have read the books, watched the movies, bought the merchandize, and written Fan Fiction and comments on websites dedicated to anything and everything about the series. The books and subsequent franchise are so popular that "there can't be a single person anywhere who hasn't heard of 'the boy who lived' and the best-selling books that bear his name" (Terego, 2006, p. 146).

The incredible monetary success indicates that the series experienced vast exposure. Rowling's books have been translated into 68 languages and transported to more than 200 territories, overall selling over four hundred million copies (scholastic.com, 2010). With the exposure came scandals and controversies hitting the cultural waters with a hiss (jkrowling.org, 2009). As movies were made and bookstores hosted midnight release parties, people petitioned to ban the series, lawsuits were filed over ownership of the content or ideas and teachers and

professors began teaching lessons and courses based on the books. People questioned the way adults began reading a children's series:

> Though I was initially put off by the sheer popularity of the books I was intrigued by the idea of transgressive adults wrapping the book in plain paper so they could read it on the subway. (Heilman, 2003, p. 1)

Magical themes in the series began to be called into question. As Blake (2002) points out about one such protest:

> [Protestor] Mr. Jones explained to the local newspaper reporter that the film 'shows how to cast spells and encourages young people to get involved in things like blood sacrifice'…These Christian Fundamentalist attacks on the new paganism…have been strongest in the United States, but they have echoed all over the world. (pp. 94-5)

The monumental amount of money earned by the series began to be speculated about:

> The infringement of consumerism on child culture is particularly evident in the mass marketing of the *Harry Potter* products…The proliferation of these items constitute a blatant exploitation of the genuine excitement for children's literature that stems from children's true interests. (Turner-Vorbeck, 2006, p. 17)

Even the book's status as a piece of children's literature was called into question as the public discussed how children were spellbound by a series of books and whether that intense interest was an indicator of something more sinister. As Taub and Servaty (2006) write, "Objections to the books stem from their controversial content—from the centrality of magic to the topic of death to scenes that some believe are too violent, intense, or scary for children" (p. 13).

All of these concerns fuelled reactions to the series, as Nexon and Neumann (2006) write, "The books have become one of the most challenged works in school and public libraries, and

one of the most frequent subjects of book burnings" (p. 3). As a result, the *Harry Potter* phenomenon reached beyond pop culture history and into the history of the public sphere. As Jenkins (2006) notes, the environment created around the series is an inevitable result of what he categorizes as convergence media. He writes:

> By convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want….In the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, and every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms. (pp. 2-3)

Jenkins also provides an explanation for how this new kind of convergence media is impacting the social world. Specifically, Rowling's books sparked many new kinds of media that represented a common situation in the treatment of convergence media. He describes this process as the death of one paradigm and the birth of another. Potter, then, is at the center of a struggle over literacy where literacy is what we can do with both printed material and media (Jenkins, 2006, p. 176). Jenkins (2006) articulates here the importance of understanding how controversial convergence media influence the public's interaction with media, beyond their simple entertainment consumption. As Jenkins goes on to say:

> Historically, constraints on literacy come from attempts to control different segments of the population—some societies have embraced universal literacy, others have restricted literacy to specific social classes or along racial and gender lines. We may also see the current struggle over literacy as having the effect of determining who has the right to participate in our culture and on what terms. (2006, p. 177)

It is important to examine the communication environment in which these decisions are being made over who has the right to participate in culture and on what terms.

The *Harry Potter* culture represents a piece of convergence culture. A book entered the world, became popular and was translated into a plethora of new media for people to experience and participate in. As a result of its success, the series became controversial; as a result of the controversies, the series inspired public discourse. The controversies surrounding the *Harry Potter* series are in part responsible for fostering continual interest in the content, as the books became a "regular figure of the popular press" (Whited, 2002, pp. 3-6). Thus, the series entered both the private sphere of people's homes and the public sphere of the mass media, legislation and even academia. The phenomenon of *Harry Potter* and the interaction of the popularity of the series with the magic of the devoted fans, in connection with the reviews and judgments about the series are what make it an ideal case to understand how an event such as a pop culture phenomenon can influence social meaning making. This thesis analyzes opinion pieces written about *Harry Potter* in the mainstream American news press.

Thus far, the environment of *Harry Potter* culture and its place in the context of public discourse has been introduced. This thesis seeks to map out the way public discourse about the series demonstrates how people interact with the series. So far, much of the research concerning the series has focused on an evaluation of the content of the books and the behavior of those involved in the series. While scholars such as Heilman (2006) and Whited (2002) have published collections of critical essays evaluating the content of the series, this thesis is instead focused on the communication surrounding the series and its implication for social language behavior and cognition.

The following chapter outlines how social identity theory provides a lens through which we can understand how language use in public discourse represents a process of social-categorization. Similarly, it explains how the press is a site of public discourse that includes opinion editorial language. This language provides access to the ideological perspectives that analysis of social-categorization benefits from.

Chapter three explains the discourse analysis methodology behind an investigation of opinion editorial language in news articles concerning *Harry Potter*. Chapters four and five report the results of the investigation of the first and second research questions concerning social categories and strategies and discuss what they tell us about the relationship between the public discourse and the participants in the *Harry Potter* culture. Chapter five concludes this thesis through a discussion of the way the social categories at work in the discourse apply to other convergence media phenomena.

Chapter Two

Social Identity Theory

Harry potter ideology and communication.

The cultural saturation discussed in the introduction meant that the series was no longer just a book and people could no longer suffice to say they either liked or disliked *Harry Potter*. Instead, the series and those that participated with it inspired a discourse that incorporated the expression of social categories in language. The concept of social categories is based on social identity theory. The theory, which originated with authors Tajfel and Turner in 1979, postulates that social groups create social identities based on shared meanings. Social identity theory assumes that "First, the level and kind of identity used to represent self and others vary with one's motives, values and expectations, one's background knowledge and theories, and the social context within which comparison takes place," (Turner, 1999, p. 14). Harwood (2006) provides this succinct summary:

> Hence, individuals categorize their social worlds, categorize themselves into ingroups and others into outgroups and engage in social comparisons between those groups. To the extent that the ingroup membership is valued and salient, the individual can be said to have a social identification with that group. (p. 6)

This theory began with ideological roots, attempting to understand how people organized their worlds by comparing themselves to others. However, it also treats ideology as inseparable from communication. While the above summary from Harwood illustrates the ideological structure of the theory, the communication as a result of this structure remains dynamic because "communication also plays an important role in *constructing* the nature of group memberships and group categories" (Harwood, 2005, p. 6). Individual ideology is manifested through

communication and interaction with these group membership and group categories exists in a social environment. Hanks (1996) describes this interaction between ideology, communication and social setting by writing, “We are thus going towards a view of speaking in which utterance production involves a dialectic between the expressive production of the speaker into the world and the simultaneous construction of the speaker according to the world” (p. 205). Popular culture phenomena enter discourse in ways that go well beyond people expressing like or dislike, approval or disapproval, judgment or praise for a piece of entertainment. Social identity theory allows us to understand how a popular culture phenomenon such as *Harry Potter* goes beyond saturating our lives with wizard imagery and blockbuster movies to invoke social categories at work in *Harry Potter* culture.

Social identity theory provides a way to analyze how communication affects communication. Thus, this is a structure for understanding how the discourse surrounding the *Harry Potter* phenomenon had ideological implications for people. The story became something to speculate about, like a serial television show. In America, many people began initiating conversations with the question “Do you read *Harry Potter*?” Similarly, what would happen to *Harry Potter* began to be more and more culturally relevant (Kinzer, 2001). Questions were asked by people about what impact the stories were having on children, adults and anyone that came into contact with the material. This interaction shows a clear ideological structure to the discourse.

The *Harry Potter* phenomenon has inspired public discussion that incorporates new vocabulary, such as calling someone a “muggle”, as well as influencing existing social categories, such as characterizing adult readers as childish if they are interested in a “children’s” series. By understanding how “words, like other valued objects, circulate in social groups,” it is

possible to pinpoint specific topics and content, such as *Harry Potter* discourse, in order to examine how the ways people are contributing to that discourse are part of the process described by social identity theory (Hanks, p. 217). As Hanks (1996) further explains, “Being in the loop and occupying a certain relation to an utterance constitutes one as a defacto participant” (p. 217). Hanks’ explanation of the way words are objects that are circulated and ‘worn’ as membership badges provides a way to understand how an aspect such as the new vocabulary of a pop culture phenomenon could affect the creation and circulation of social categories. Therefore, by examining how words and topics associated with the *Harry Potter* content are circulating, it is possible to understand how employing the word “muggle” or even calling someone a “muggle” is, in fact, a manifestation of social categories. The social categories represented through new words are the first glimpse into how *Harry Potter* is actually a part of convergence culture, or what Jenkins (2006) describes:

> Knowledge communities form around mutual intellectual interests; their members work together to forge new knowledge often in realms where no traditional expertise exists; the pursuit of and assessment of knowledge is at once communal and adversarial. Mapping how these knowledge communities work can help us better understand the social nature of contemporary media consumption. (p. 20)

Using social identity theory used a lens to examine what we the social nature of *Harry Potter* as contemporary media, leads to the following research question

RQ1: What social categories are used, referenced or created in the discourse regarding *Harry Potter* and how are they perceived?

From social categories to social strategies.

With the inclusion of communication in this ideological structure comes more than understanding a dynamic interaction. Social identity theory also strives to explain how the dynamic process is also strategic and like any comparison, something or someone, always comes out on top. The communication, therefore, represents two sides of comparison based on *us* and *them*. The discourse around *Harry Potter* spawned by these controversies also involves *us* versus *them* language. The communication surrounding the series *matters*, in that it follows this same ideological, communicative structure and "significant social problems…are very clearly a function of individuals acting in terms of their group memberships and treating others in terms of those memberships" (Harwood, 2006, p. 88). Social identity theory also involves self-categorization. This concerns group membership language because it assumes speakers constantly refer to one another. Self-categorization contends that people categorize one another in contrast to a normative view of categories within a context. The social categories are applied by people based on their relationships to normative categories. By self-categorizing as belonging they both claim participation in that group and disassociate themselves from any group in conflict. The group someone belongs to is shown ingroup favoritism and the outgroups are shown differentiation (Turner et.al., 1987). Ingroup and outgroup language work through the deindividuation of self and others, emphasizing ingroup membership instead. Out of this process come stereotypes, as Branscombe (1999) writes:

> Self-categorization theory argues that stereotypes are social categorical judgments, perceptions of people in terms of their group memberships…They are fluid, variable, and context dependent. A stereotype of the same people may vary in categorical level, kind, content and prototypical meaning as a function of the relationship between self and

> others, the frame of reference, the dimensions of comparison and the background knowledge, expectations, needs, values and goals of the perceiver. (p. 26)

This allows for the analysis of how those who write about *Harry Potter* identify themselves as part of a certain group and take part in constructing that group. They express *their* category and characterize *their* behaviors, as a representative member of *us*. Then they use self-categorization to stereotype others as an outgroup, with its own set of associated behaviors. Social identity theory explains that the comparison between the two sides follows a pattern of positive *us*, or ingroup language, and negative *them*, or outgroup language. This premise involves a structure known as the ideological square. As Oktar (2001) explains, this emphasizes that individuals:

1. Express/emphasize information that is positive about *us*
2. Express/emphasize information that is negative about *them*
3. Suppress/de-emphasize information that is positive about *them*
4. Suppress/de-emphasize information that is negative about *us*

Social identity theorists rely on three categories to understanding the strategies for dealing with this intergroup difference: social mobility, social creativity and social competition. Social mobility involves strategies of transitioning between groups by making in-out comparisons more favorable. Social creativity is a strategy of making intragroup comparisons that redefine negative dimensions of comparison to be more positive and create new dimensions of comparison. This means that this strategy is chosen in the attempt to achieve a positive social identity by changing aspects of the ingroup/outgroup comparisons such as by using a once low-prestige language or derogatory term to express camaraderie or by seeking alternative points of

comparison. Finally, social competition involves the direct struggle for a positive social identity among groups (Harwood, 2005).

Understanding the underlying cultural logical of when individuals are using *us* versus *them* language requires attending to both in and outgroup categories. Here Sacks' (1992) membership categorization device provides a useful framework for understanding how categories are not only created, but also called upon and packed with inferences and worked into sets. He explains his device:

> I'm calling this whole apparatus the MIR device…If we're going to describe Members' activities, and the way they produce activities and see activities and organize their knowledge about them, then we're going to have to find out how they go about choosing among the available sets of categories for grasping some event. (p. 41)

Sacks' device helps in understanding how the language the authors use interacts with their social environment and thus the in and outgroup language others are using. The way these categories interact as part of public discourse is illustrated within Sacks' model of membership categorization devices. Sacks emphasizes that these devices are sets of categories, collections plus rules of application. These sets are governed by two rules. The first is the economy rule, that a single category from any membership category device can be referentially adequate. The economy rule show shows how individual categories can actually be referring to a set of reference relationships among categories. He calls this 'reference satisfaction. The second is the consistency rule that states:

> If a population of persons being categorized and if a category from some device's collection has been used to categorize a first member of the population, then the category

> or other categories of the same collection *may* be used to categorize further Members of the population. (p. 241)

The consistency rule describes how sets of categories also interact based on their relevance to each other. Sacks finally describes what this device and its rules mean for public discourse by outlining the interaction between Members, their categorizations and the devices, which are sets of categories, interact with each other. He writes:

> If any Member hears another categorize someone else or themselves on one of these items, then the way the Member hearing this decides what category is appropriate, is by themselves categorizing the categorizer according to the same set of categories. So if you hear B categorize C as 'old,' then you would categorize B to decide how *you* would categorize C. And again, the same procedure works for such a thing as social class. (p. 45)

This illustrates that this interaction is happening in public discourse. It does not mean the individual has no agency to self-categorize outside the stereotypical categories presented by the public, but rather that identity can never be separate from social environment. As Sacks shows, members hearing categories is part of the process of those members making decisions about how to categorize others based upon that influence. As Harwood (2005) writes, "Social identification theory posits that the choice of which strategy to pursue depends on the perception of alternative to the status quo" (p. 8).

An understanding of social identity as a process of social categorization and stereotyping leads to the following research question:

RQ2: What major strategies are used in constructing such perceptions?

The press.

Harwood's explanation of the choice of when to pursue a strategy brings another important aspect of social identity theory to the forefront, the majority. His use of the word status quo highlights the fact that if strategy is involved, power is as well. For this reason, it is necessary to scrutinize mass media because they claim to represent the interest of the status quo but are never truly objective. Within public discourse, there is a dynamic of meaning production that takes place within a field of tension between speaker and text, as Hanks (1996) writes:

> On the one side the discourse expression projects a world, and on the other it meets up with a world already in full swing. Obviously, the existence of media formations, such as the press, the electronic media, and the networks of people who communicate routinely with one another, all prefigure the paths of reception for any discourse. (p. 218)

Media discourse proliferates and influences reader perception of groups, which is a form of 'symbolic power'. This symbolic power of the media allows for analysis of media roles within the reproduction of ideology (Van Dijk, 1989). As Bell (1991) points out, "Society is pervaded by media language… But media language is not just heard by one or two people but by mass audiences. It is the few talking to the many. Media are dominating presenters of language in our society at large," (p. 1). Clearly, media language is a strong indicator of the social categories it creates and interacts with. The way an individual self-categorizes and stereotypes is inherently based on his/her social environment and media language is a large part of that social environment. Hanks (1996) writes, "If we imagine this process at the level of utterances transmitted by radio, television and print media we can see how the reproduction and dissemination of language create a network of receivers" (p. 217). However, creating a network of receivers means media powers also have an active role as participators in the process of social identification. It is not enough to recognize that radio, television and print media participate in

communication, we must also recognize that there are *individuals* responsible for the radio, print and television content and they are using their own social identity strategies. Oktar (2001) writes the media are active in their process of recording and describing news events. Their reporting involves a representation of their ideological affiliations and:

> Consequently, the media structure and process events into ideologically unified messages and in so doing maintain and extend the readers who are defined and created by being consumers of the products of that medium. (p. 320)

The public setting of the *Harry Potter* phenomenon situates it within the broader context of public opinion and discourse, the natural setting of the news. The press is representative of this public, social meaning creation concerning the *Harry Potter* series because it is a site of 'framing' (Heilman, 2006). News media offers a condensed, representative version of the discourse perspectives concerning the series. Specifically, opinion and editorial pieces (hereafter referred to as op ed) play a particular role in the press because they are "the one page that represents the newspaper's most important role—as community watchdog, agenda-setter, and conscience" (Hallock, 2007, p. xxiii). This characteristic of op ed language as the conscience and agenda-setting arm of the news also points to the specific *kind* of language in op ed pieces, emotional, self-expressive language. As Hanks (1996) writes, "the expressive force of speaking is most obvious in emotionally charged utterances and in cases where the speaker appears to be expressing something unique to herself" (p. 204). Therefore, op ed language in the news represents the way authors interact with and proliferate social categories in the public treatment of the phenomenon.

Media language takes the identity perspectives of smaller groups and magnifies them into a larger context. Jaworski (2007) points out that the authors, their own identities, the identities

of their audience members and the perception of membership to group identities are present in media texts. He writes:

> Representation and evaluation of languages, like all language and ideological work, always involved individual and group identity statements […] in defining different identity positions, we need to distinguish between the 'self', the 'non-self' and the 'other'. (p. 277)

The language of op ed pieces identifies groups which are attributed certain characteristics based on perceptions of group behavior and the authors self-categorization as an ingroup or outgroup member. Because of the subjective nature of an op ed piece (the author has a voice and takes a stand, whether implied or explicitly), the concept of stereotypes within social identity theory is particularly useful. The author's role as an actor in the social creation of categories is based in part on his/her experience with the material and his/her use of stereotypes based on ingroup favoritism and outgroup biases. Not all stereotypes are social categories but also not all social categories are stereotypes. For instance, while the data showed the stereotype of rabid fan or book banning fundamentalists, the social category of the casual reader is a social category without being a stereotype because it is not judgmentally scrutinized. Stereotypes are social categorical judgments based on perceptions of people's group memberships (Branscombe, 1999). Therefore, stereotypes are the moral invocation of social categories. They are the result of the ideological analysis of the meaning of social categories. This theory and definition of stereotypes gives a form of analysis to consider how op ed language in news pieces situate the phenomenon of *Harry Potter* in relation to its influences on people. In this way, it addresses how authors participate in social category creation and dissemination through self-categorization

and using stereotypes to categories others. Oktar (2001) summarizes how public discourse, ideology and communication are set within the structure of social identity theory:

> This framework in which intergroup (*us* versus *them*) perceptions, prejudices and cognitive strategies, along with journalistic news values, contribute to the representation of *us* and *them* as competing social forces in the construction of media discourse. Through the media discourse most readers, in turn, tend to adopt these representations, construct cognitive models of *us* and *them* and generalize them with their own beliefs and attitudes. (pp. 320-1)

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research site.

The previous chapter yielded the following research questions:

RQ1: What social categories are used, referenced or created in the discourse regarding *Harry Potter* and how are they perceived?

RQ2: What major strategies are used in constructing such perceptions?

In order to answer these questions, I used the research site of op ed (opinion/editorial) language articles from the three largest newspapers and the two largest news magazines in the United States, *The New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post, Time Magazine* and *Newsweek* (Newspaper Association of America, 2009). The "public problems" that journalism addresses, as defined by Lindloff and Taylor (2002) include things such as legal controversies and book banning. The press is useful for discourse analysis because "of particular interest to communication researchers is the role of discourse and other symbolic forms in the way in which conflictive issues are understood by participants and audiences" (p. 73). The context of controversial issues means that authors are interacting with each other, despite not actually conversing or responding in comment forms to each other's articles. I chose the three largest papers as they represented a sufficient, yet not overwhelming amount of articles to include in the research process. *The Wall Street Journal* is among this list of largest newspapers as the largest circulation, yet it does not focus on popular culture content and thus has little to no op ed content relevant to *Harry Potter*. Therefore, I did not analyze it. I included two news magazines because they are a rich source of op ed content, yet still provide a large circulation number, which is indicative of nationwide public discourse.

These publications provide a good site for examining these questions about social categories for several reasons. First, they are accessible. Access to these publications is not only available through their own-hosted websites, but also through University hosted search sites such as LexisNexis Academic and Newsbank services. These search outlets allow for extensive searches, as each publication can be searched as far back as the beginning of the series in 1997 up until the present date, and relevant keyword searches that allow the material to be listed according to the extent to which it involves the *Harry Potter* phenomenon. Since *Harry Potter* is so famous, authors used it to gain attention for their articles. For example, many of the articles introduced material using the series as cultural reference without focusing on the evaluation of the series, as in one instance when the writer used the title of *Harry Potter* as an attention getting device while focusing the bulk of the article on another opinion such as the proliferation of television screens in cars. In order to combat the large use of *Harry Potter* as an attention getting device, I used relevance searches, which filter results based on how often key words appear in an article. Relevancy searches on these large search engines reveal articles that actually address *Harry Potter* while pushing those that merely use it and move on to the back of the search queue.

Second, this data set offered a large sample of op ed language articles. All of the publications included op ed content. Some of this content placement is fairly self-explanatory, as it is found in the op ed columns of publications such as *The New York Times*. Other times, the op ed language articles were presented in both newspaper and news magazine sections such as Lifestyle (sections devoted to examining public life), Perspectives (dedicated to introducing one particular author's perspective on a news object) or Culture and Arts and Culture sections (dedicated to examining arts and popular culture objects).

Methods.

I used discourse analysis to discover categories and the context in which they occur. As Harwood (2005) describes:

> This "contextual" focus is useful because it draws attention to the similarities and differences between various intergroup contexts. All contexts share dynamics in terms of identity processes, stereotyping, status hierarchies, and intergroup discrimination. However, each has its own unique feature. (p. 8)

Discourse analysis also allows for analysis to see the process of negotiating social identities (Lindloff and Taylor, 2002). Op ed language is language that openly offers judgment, thus violating the veneer of objectivity that news writing requires. Therefore, in order to gather articles that included op ed language, I looked for language that did not strive to exclude an author's personal voice, offered qualifying statements or personally emotional and ideological information. Also, my extensive knowledge of *Harry Potter* as a fan myself, allowed me to collect articles that dealt with the treatment of the series. Three large circulation newspapers and two large circulation news magazines yielded a total set of 90-articles written by a diverse authorship. There were 38 female authors, 38 male authors, 6 unidentified authors and 8 articles that included multiple authors of mixed gender. I was able to pick up on subtle clues about *Harry Potter* content as well as op ed language. These qualities will allow me to use discourse analysis to create a contextual picture of the social categories authors are referring to.

Collection and coding.

I searched all of the news sources for as far back as my materials allowed (through each news source's own database as well as the University of Kansas electronic record subscriptions to services which provided records). I completed relevance searches of the news source's

independence database as far as the result provided for a *Harry Potter* keyword search. This required the minimum of the series being mentioned, yet allowed the database to sort for the relevance in order to weed out articles that were of most heavy content of the series. I did a similar search in the database subscription provided by the University of Kansas, choosing a database for each publication based on the widest range of years available. These were provided by LexisNexis Academic and Newsbank search engines.

Within these searches I provided my expertise to read and select each articles to include in the research data for the requirements of op ed language and focus on the *Harry Potter* series as a subject. This allowed me to include articles that were not strictly labeled op ed, yet clearly included subjective op ed language. As Oktar (2001) points out, “The media do not passively describe or record news events, but actively reconstruct them, mostly on the basis of their own ideological affiliations” (p. 320). Therefore, it was necessary to rely on my own analytic skills rather than the labels the news publications use in order to include those articles that were more subtly op ed than explicitly so. This emphasis on both subtle and explicit op ed language was required of understanding strategy involved in social categorization and social creativity.

This process was also necessary as some publications do not have op ed sections (news magazines and some news publications) yet are still rife with op ed content. This process of article selection therefore naturally selected for op ed articles focused on *Harry Potter* as an object of discourse. For example, I did not artificially restrict my search to exclude book reviews, yet during the process I did not end up including strict book reviews as they generally do not include op ed language, instead simply recapping the content of the books in a summary of plot, characters and conflicts.

The number, 90 articles, was also not artificially imposed upon the data collection, but rather was a result of researching far into the hundreds of keyword search results and reaching a point where the articles no longer dealt with the series at all, instead including the independent words “harry” or “potter” for irrelevant reasons or passing comments. Therefore, the articles collected represent a complete and thorough representation of op ed language pieces present in the included publications that focus on the *Harry Potter* series. After searching for as many articles as provided by the results, the data set was confined to 20 articles from each newspaper source and 15 sources from each news magazine source. These numbers provided all of the articles the proved relevant to the content of *Harry Potter* and employing more than one instance of op ed language.

Coding for categories involved a process of inductive reasoning using discourse analysis. This approach was especially useful because the previous literature on *Harry Potter* did not fully cover trends or categories used in the series (Lindloff & Taylor, 2002). Coding as an analytic process requires coding for as many categories as possible, in order for the emergence of categories as naturally as possible (Lindloff & Taylor, 2002). Similarly, categories can also be limited in that they impede the process of thematic emergence, so this analytic process required that I code for as many categories as possible in order to test for the selection of the articles to make sure the authors displayed any social categories (Denzin, 2003).

However, the process of identifying the emergence of these categories themselves needs to also be specifically addressed as the categories used influenced the analysis of the data. Lindloff and Taylor (2002) define categories as “a covering term for an array of general phenomena: concepts, constructs, themes and other types of “bins” in which to put items that are similar” (p. 214). These categories require highly inductive reasoning (in other words, justifying

and rethinking how each textual piece contributes to, or is an outlier from the categories in order to constantly redefine and contextualize any categories that seem to emerge).

In order to answer my first research question, I first needed to identify what social categories were being used in the discourse. In order to do this, I read through the articles several times in order to observe patterns and the undercover structure of normative rules (Van Dijk, 1997). By immersing myself in the articles from the entire proposed data set of three large newspapers and two news magazines, I identified social categories and continually added to, or modified the characteristics of those categories based on the concept of "fuzzy" categories or high-inference categories (Lindloff & Taylor, 2002).

This method was tested based on a pilot study done in November of 2009. This study was aimed at identifying the social categories present in discourse surrounding *Harry Potter*. The study was done in order to determine if articles in large circulation news publications that used op ed language were using social categories in their discourse. The pilot was conducted on four publications, *The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post* and *USA Today*. The search for the pilot study was done with a similar method of conducting relevance searches throughout the individual databases of the articles for the keywords "harry potter". This helped me to identify four articles, upon which an initial analysis of social categories was conducted. In the pilot, I identified a list of 10-20 rough categories, some of which did not persist in my analysis and some of which proved to be continually relevant such as child and adult fans or academics and intellectuals. The pilot study showed that social categories were present in the discourse surrounding *Harry Potter* and laid groundwork for the inductive process of recognizing those. For example, this pilot data revealed the categories of child versus adult were often dropped or picked up as social categories by authors depending on whether the author was

writing about the nature of age specific cognition or people as a whole. One author characterized the social category of child readers by referencing the content of the series, constantly referring to the *Harry Potter* series as being written with a child's eye, a child's eye-view or appealing to rudimentary instincts of childish psychology. Similarly, he referred to the social category of adult readers by characterizing those adults with a lack of imagination or labeling them as inhabitants of urban jungles.

I used a similar method based on the pilot data in order to identify categories. Using this method, I was able to identify a list of social categories throughout the articles that could then be coded for based on a second deductive reading of each article (see Appendix A). I used a coding sheet to re-read each article and identify the categories used by labeling each with a single or double letter indicating the category that was manifested in the discourse based on the list generated in the first reading.

Second, in order to answer RQ2, I also needed to code for the associations and disassociations the authors were making with these social categories. Therefore, the coding of the categories also informed coding for in and outgroup language and the parallel positive, negative or neutral language. First, many of the categories used by authors are based on which in and outgroup categories they find relevant to themselves and their self-categorization. The previously mentioned pilot study also contributed to developing the method for testing for the positive and negative associations and disassociations made by the authors. This was accomplished by testing for the ability to constantly redefine the boundaries of, and add to the list of social categories in the discourse. During the pilot study, I constantly modify the categories used based on the implicit and explicit categories. For example, in Byatt's (2003) article the author does not explicitly use "we" as a marker for himself as a literary critic, though

he does identify himself through implicit use of several different literary classics and extolling the virtues of "great children's writers of the past" (p. 13). Finally, he referred simply to "people" with ingroup language, using words like "we", "our time" and referring to a specific childhood as "remaining potent for most of us" (Byatt, 2003). Therefore, I used this process from the pilot study to develop cells in my coding sheet including an "implicit/explicit" column, in order to specify how the authors were referring to social categories and positive, negative or neutral columns to identify how authors were associating and disassociating from those categories.

Finally, I also coded from the topics (or controversies) the authors mentioned in the articles in order to validate the contextualization of the *Harry Potter* discourse in these controversies.

Chapter Four

Results and Discussion for RQ1

Social categories.

RQ1: What social categories are used, referenced or created in the discourse regarding *Harry Potter* and how are they perceived?

The authors used a variety of social categories within the discourse surrounding *Harry Potter*. What follows is a preview of these categories present in the discourse, based on the way Sacks (1992) describes how these categories are organized into sets, devices of membership categories. The devices surrounding *Harry Potter* were organized into two levels. The first level is that of categories based on relationship to the text. These categories are organized around the participation with the *Harry Potter* series. The first and unanimously used category is that of fans. Every article concerning the series invoked the category of fan, which makes sense because the fan following is a large part of its enduring presence in the press (Whited, 2002). However, authors identified subcategories of fans. The subcategory of child fan was largely used and invoked in 58 of the 90-article set. Particularly because of its status as a piece of children's literature, but also because of adults concern over what healthy or dangerous behaviors categorize the child fan, this category emerged as a significant subcategory of the *Harry Potter* fan.

The adult fan subcategory, on the other hand, also emerged in a majority of the articles as well. 52 of the 90 articles invoked the adult fan of the series, most obviously as a result of the fact that adults are the authors of these articles and adults are reading them. The adult fan subcategory establishes the importance of the phenomenon beyond the impact of a children's literature series on children. Instead, it deals with the *Harry Potter* culture's presence for

multiple age groups and generations. As Jenkins (2006) writes, "Because the *Harry Potter* fandom involved both adults and children is became a space where conversations could occur across generations" (p. 216).

Further, fan subcategories also involve the *characteristics* of the child and adult fan. As Sacks (1992) explains, a set of categories also involves 'category bound activities'. He writes, "By the term I intend to notice that many activities are taken by Members to be done by some particular or several particular categories of Members where the categories are categories from membership categorization devices" (p. 243). Authors describe the activities of the particular categories of adult and child fan through specifying changed child and changed adult readers as subcategories characterized by activities. These subcategories represent a part of the fan membership categorization device by describing those reader who interaction with the series had some effect on their activity. For the changed child reader, which emerged in 30 articles, this means those children that became, for example, avid readers of all books as result of reading *Harry Potter*, or learned moral, religious or civic messages and behaviors as a result of the content. Changed adult reader, a category in 19 articles, for example, could be adults that began thinking differently about children's literature as a result of reading *Harry Potter*.

The last subcategory of the set of fans is that of the casual reader. This category specifies the moderate participators on a spectrum of fan activity. Casual readers are those that read, like, and buy the books or watch the movies, yet do not participate beyond this level of consumption. Not surprisingly, the casual reader subcategory appeared in 45 of the 90 articles. While a large and dedicated fandom is a standout characteristic of *Harry Potter* culture, there is also a large part of the population that contributed to the financial success of the series without devoting additional energy to participating in the phenomenon. As the articles in this data set are part of a

large public discourse and do not appear on a fan website, it makes sense that authors would wish to communicate the casual reader as a significant category representing their audience as well.

The fans are not the only categories that make up the set of categories based on a relationship to the text. There are also those categories that are contextualized by the text, but not by a positive evaluation of its content. One such category is that of the non-participator. Members of this category are characterized as people that make the choice to not read the books or watch the movies or buy the merchandize, or generally consume *Harry Potter* media. The ideological implications of that choice, however, reveal subcategories of non-participators. In 57 of the 90 articles, authors referenced the non-participator and they did so in one of two ways, as apathetic non-participators or as anti-participators. First, apathetic category members are characterized by dislike based on personal taste. Members do not care about the series. Those that are against the series specify the second subcategory of actual anti-participators. These members view the series as dangerous or bad based on principles, such as dark religious connotations, inappropriate moral messages or fluff writing. Jenkins (2006) describes the anti-participators:

> The Conservative Christians are simply the most visible of a broad range of groups, each citing its own ideological concerns, that are reacting to a shift in the media paradigm. Anti-*Harry Potter* Christian share many concerns with other reform groups linking worries about the persuasive power of advertising to concerns about the demonic nature of immersion, tapping anxieties about consumerism and multinational capitalism in their critiques of global spiritualism. (p. 208)

Lastly, the non-participation category specifies the subcategory of commentators. In 38 articles, authors invoked the category of commentator, those with an evaluative role. This category includes those members are critics (whether they are fan critics or non-fan critics) and scholars (or academics) that are involved in the study of *Harry Potter* and/or its influences. Often these members provide "expert" testimony and offer logical or analytical evidence to support ideological claims.

Thinking back to the our first level of social categories, all the categories and subcategories previewed thus far are arranged around a relationship to the *Harry Potter* text. These included two membership categorization devices, or sets, fans and non-participators.

The second level of social categories is based on a relationship to the readers. These categories are arranged into the devices of stewards and media powers. Stewards are the set of categories based on those in control of exposing, or preventing exposure to, the series to children. This includes the categories of parents, guardians and teachers. Clearly, these categories can be in conflict with or overlap with other categories in fan and non-participator devices. For example, anti-participators that object to the series based on religious messages may appeal to parents as a category because they bear the responsibility as gatekeepers to keep their children away from the series. However, this overlap or conflict does not impede on the fact that 33 articles specifically categorized stewards as members responsible for where and how the series interacted with children on a micro level.

Media power is a category in relation to the readers as well. Members include publishers and other moneymakers that profit from the series or the movies, games, action figures, theme park, and other merchandizing. The underlying logical of this category is part of the ideological framework Jenkins (2006) describes around convergence media. He writes, "For others, the

concern is with the marketing of those fantasies to children—whether we can opportunities for participation to be commodified." (p. 215).

Fans.

Throughout the discourse surrounding *Harry Potter*, authors invoked the social categories of fan. Authors almost never used a simple category of fan, instead embedding the category with specificity and context. Specificity was created through identifying age groups of fans, such as child fans (even rarely teen fans) and adult fans. Context was established through author's creative use of word play and adjectives. Together, these subcategories created through specificity and context created a set of interrelated categories, a membership categorization device in relation to the text.

Fan categories are also contextualized and refined by the authors. These contexts can relate to controversial content, such as popularity and money. Authors can employ general phrases to allude to these aspects of the phenomenon. For instance, popularity can be represented as "zillions of readers" (Gray, 2001), "passionate readers" (Donahue, 2001), "zillions around the world" (Wild about Harry, 2007) and "How did this bespectacled British boy ensnare millions of readers of all ages" (Puente, 2010). These quotes contextualize (here without the added specificity of age) the popularity of the series and importance of addressing the why questions that phenomenal success and interest necessitate.

These contextualized fan categories are not always descriptive in nature, however. Often authors employ adjectives to add dimension to the category of fan, such as rabid, frenzied, purist, legion, addicts, believers, speed-readers. These writers even create new words to *describe Harry Potter* fans:

"True Hogwartsians will return to the source and compare written and visual texts with the care of a New Critical scholar" (Corliss, 2001).

"Yet the hordes of Harry-ites and the flocks of Frodo-ians, along with those muddlesome Muggles…Most Potterheads who are more likely to be of grade-school age or older and female, cite Harry's hipper approach and its youth appeal" (Wloszczyna, 2001).

These playful examples are a way authors both assert their own voices into the story and indicate that *Harry Potter* fans necessitate a new social category in and of themselves.

Child fans.

The most widely called upon category overall was that of the child fan. Authors may have employed the category for their own varied purposes, but fewer than five authors in the data set of 90 articles failed to either mention or allude to the child fans interacting with the series. The reason for this category's almost explicit use is fairly simple to deduce based on the phenomenon itself. All of the content analyzed concerned *Harry Potter* specifically, and bookstores as well as the author herself categorize the books as children's literature. Much of the marketing, advertising and controversy surround the obvious child fan involvement. While authors almost unanimously mentioned this category, it was specified in several ways, including an effort to contextualize the article or to mention some of the topics associated with the material, including the popularity of the series:

"The plan worked so well that bookstores the length of Britain were jammed with young readers, still in their school uniforms, when the magic moment arrived" (Reid, 1999).

> "Bookstores reopened to thousands of costumed Harrys or just kids in pajamas who couldn't wait an extra minute for their books" (Jones, 2003).

This category was often used to underline the importance of including editorial content on the series; that there were large numbers of child fans of the series and therefore fandom is newsworthy first and foremost by virtue of sheer size. In 11 articles authors also further specified the category of child fan by referencing characteristics such as age range (referring to teens, or young children) and gender (such as referring to boys loving to read).

Adult fans.

Adults are also portrayed as fans in this discourse. As mentioned above, the adult fan could be involved in a familial process of interacting with children and thus becoming fans. Examples of the use of this category include this "joining" with children:

> "Why exactly has this tale of a young English orphan seized with imagination of young people around the world? And joining the kids are fanatic grown-ups" (Donahue, 2000).

> "Now the serial stories that have captivated American children and their parents for much of the last 10 years are ending within two months of each other" (Jones, 2007).

Authors also characterize the category of adult fan through an independent adult interest in the series, one called upon to describe the adults that willingly and independently participate with the series. For example, one author develops the category of adult fan by describing her and her husband,

> "It took three years, a lot of coaxing and putting him in a partial food coma to seal the deal, but I finally got my husband to convert…Six books later, he's a bona fide Potterhead" (Tahir, 2007).

Other authors use the adult fan group more broadly:

> "Similarly, some of Ms. Rowling's adult readers are simply reverting to the child they were when they read the Billy Bunter books" (Byatt, 2003).

Changed adult and child readers.

While most often employing the broad categories of adult and child fans, authors also call upon the categories of the changed adult and child readers. These are the adult and child fans that have invested in and participated with the series in ways that have changed or could potentially change them. This often relates to the controversial topics associated with the series, one of which is whether once a child has read the series that child will become a reader for life. For example, a changed child reader could be a child fan of *Harry Potter* that has, as a result of the series, become an avid reader:

> "But although there are many legitimate reasons for praising the series – the exciting plots, the new young readers being drawn to books, the quality of writing." (Gleick, 2000).

> "Getting children to read is no small blessing, and Ms. Rowling has provided them with a key to literacy" (Safire, 2000).

Similar change involves the perception of religious or moral messages in the content of the series:

"But some are very concerned that parents are reading the series to impressionable children under the age of 8. And some parents find a series that glamorizes witchcraft, dis-obedience and magic to be offensive and potentially dangerous" (Donahue, 2000).

"As long as it took for the zealots who claim they're protecting children from evil (and evil can be found everywhere these days) to discover that children actually like these books. If children are excited about a book, it must be suspect" (Blume, 1999).

"And the youngsters involved are getting a valuable civic lesson; that access to books is not automatic and must be fought for" (Harry Potter faces biggest foe, 2000).

For adults, change often involves the possibility of becoming a fan of a children's literature series:

""But have you read the books?' adults keep imploring the cynical few. 'You have to read the books.'" (Stuever, 2001).

"Reading writers like these, we feel we are being put back in touch with earlier parts of our culture, when supernatural and inhuman creatures – from whom we thought we learned our sense of good and evil – inhabited a world we did not feel we controlled. If we regress, we regress to a lost sense of significance we mourn for," (Byatt, 2003).

Casual readers.

Lastly, authors specified the social category of fans through referencing the subcategory of the casual readers. The casual reader is simply part of the audience, those that read the series and like or dislike it much like they would any other book.

> "Harry has followers who are devoted to him even if they don't always understand him, and other fair-weather fans" (Diamant, 2010).

Consequently, authors also often specified casual reader fans by a passive rather than active interaction with the phenomenon, passive meaning that these readers are acted upon by the phenomenon rather than participating in the action. For example:

> "J.K. Rowling has enchanted the world; the reader is drawn into a magical universe" (Yocaris, 2004).

> "Judging by the millions of readers he's bewitched so far, Harry Potter is indeed a very powerful wizard" (Jones, 1999).

Another way authors' access this category of casual reader fans is by divorcing their interaction from the actual material of the series, such as through common knowledge:

> With Harry, there is still one more compelling aspect: the social currency that comes with reading the books. A new Potter is the talk of the middle school or the summer camp or the neighborhood playground. 'Have you read it?' becomes the question du jour (Weeks, 2003).

And last but not least, and perhaps most specifically, authors characterize the casual reader fans as consumers. Authors call upon the phenomenal monetary success of the series,

> "Those people – all Muggles through and through – are the ones who tend to talk mainly about the phenomenal sales these books are enjoying" (Klinkenborg, 1999). Are these people necessarily readers at all?

> "At the Book Stall in Winnetka, Ill., customers made such a big, happy noise that neighbors called the cops" (Jones, 2000).

Non-participators.

Another membership categorization device arranged around categories relationship to the text was non-participants. Apathetic non-participants have no interest in the series and have a lack of knowledge or an outright lack of interest in the material's content. A lack of knowledge also characterizes the category of non-participator. As a broad lack of knowledge authors used this category thusly:

> "Neither of these cleverly factitious offerings, both of course written by Rowling, will make much sense to those not already stepped in Potter lore" (Gray, 2001).

Apathetic non-participators.

More explicitly, authors us the lack of knowledge characteristic of the apathetic non-participator category to imply that the category results from some kind of social ostracization:

> "In exactly one month, you will feel remarkably thick unless you bone up on the world of Harry Potter and the Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry," (Donahue, 2000).

> "First all, for the uninitiated, here are three surefire, clinically tested signs that you are Muggle" (Gray, 1999).

And finally, the apathetic non-participators can also be removed from the phenomenon based on an overall lack of interest in the content of the series in the most fundamental form of like and dislike:

> "Although we'd had some good times at Hogwarts, deep down we weren't wild about Harry, and the freedom of finally confessing this secret to each other made us feel like co-conspirators" (Charles, 2010).

> "Where was I? I read the first few chapters of this so-called manuscript and, frankly, thought it drivel" (Kenney, 2010).

Anti-participants.

Anti-participants openly object to the series because of a perceived controversial effect of the series, standing apart on principle of the characteristics of the series. Anti participators due to controversy could include religious groups, for example:

> "It has been burned, banned and derided, mostly by fundamentalist Christian groups who express two concerns about it: that it encourages a favorable view of magic and witchcraft and, more significantly, that is gets the basic theology of good and evil wrong," (Kennicott, 2003).

> "That's precisely what bothers some Christians about *Harry Potter*. Linda Harvey, president of Mission America, a Christian non-profit organization based in Columbus, Ohio, worries that so much information about witchcraft and wizardry could result in an upsurge in occultism" (Puig, 2001).

Those anti-participators that stand apart on principle include such examples as concern over the fact that *Harry Potter* is discouraging a child culture of "cool" or even that the popularity of the series is enough to inspire a rebellion. For example:

"We told our children that it was best to be smart, kind, open-minded – and yes, that was a good thing. We encourage their obsessions with dinosaurs, planetary physics, recycling, the trombone, mathletics, Achievement Camp. But is went too far. Is it any wonder that kids today come out so incredibly dorky, that Harry Potter would be the 21st-century version of cool?" (Stuever, 2001).

"I'm about to ask about science research opportunities when he points to a nearby field and mentions the sport students play there: a flightless version of J.K. Rowling's Quidditch game…nothing seems more reassuring than imagining that college will be the realization of a fantasy world I've been imagining since childhood. Obviously colleges have picked up on this. But they're trying too hard. They're selling the wrong thing. And my friends and I won't be fooled," (Edelson, 2009).

The non-participators are characterized by no involvement with the series, the fan are intensely involved with the series, the casual readers are characterized by a perfunctory interest in the series, so what about those that read and participate with the series, yet without their own interest at heart?

***Commentators*.**

Commentators are another category of those who were interested in the series and its components but were not interested in consuming it. Commentators can be broken into the critics and the scholars. This category represents those that are making judgment calls about the phenomenon that is *Harry Potter*, without representing personal interest as the most important impetus for commentary. The obvious characteristic this qualification calls into order is that of knowledge. Without interest, commentators would fall under the category of non-participator

but they do not because of one important difference; commentators are characterized in the discourse as knowledgeable. They bring their qualifications to bear, making evaluations and judgments about the series with the implication that an audience wants to hear from them. The main function of this category is not representative for the audience; commentators are not necessarily concerned with writing for or about the majority or minority. The category of commentator is instead represented as the knowledgeable evaluator and thus breaks down more specifically into critic and scholar.

Critics.

Critic is on way authors' specified commentators. The use of the category of critic was consistence in the discourse with Jenkins' (2006) summarization, "More generally, these critics are concerned about the immersive and expansive nature of the imaginary worlds being constructed in contemporary media franchises" (p, 202). Because all the of the articles deal with op ed content (or voice) the commentating role is assumed, but when authors refer to and use the category of critic, they are highlighting more specific characteristics. For example:

> "Libraries and bookstores will decorate as if for Christmas. Cultural critics will bemoan that children can't be persuaded to read anything else" (Last Call on Platform 9 3/4, 2007)

> "That certainly applies to those who combine identities usually thought of as pure and distinct, like the identities of fan and critic – people working as scholars by day and as wizards by night" (Mooney, 2003).

This quote illustrates the separation of interest (fan) from evaluative knowledge (critic) as categories.

Scholars.

The difference between fan and critic also shows how more specifically, critics can be scholars. Not all critics are scholars, but this particular brand of credibility (usually manifested by a bow to academia) is a category of commentator that indicates a higher brand of knowledge than the average critic. In some instances the authors use this category with an outright label:

> "This caused such heartburn among the literati that a bestseller of children's books was created so that Rowling's books could be banished to it" (Will, 2001).

> "Academics are no different, but because of their scholarly training, they often find meanings in the four books that the rest of us miss" (Donahue, 2001).

Other times, the category was invoked through the use of developing the relevance of the academic title of a specific person. For example:

> "The article will serve as a rejoinder to critics such as Yale University's Harold Bloom, who have claimed that the Harry Potter novels lack literary merit, as well as other who see the series as little more than mass marketing run amok" (Mooney, 2003).

> "And now Jean Bethke Elshtain, a political philosopher from the University of Chicago who has spent decades making calm and reasonable arguments about why people should be more calm and reasonable, has wandered into the fray" (Kennicott, 2003).

Authors often use these titles as representative of scholars to invoke the commentator category rather than the more explicit labels mentioned above.

Stewards.

Another category was that of the stewards of information. Authors often refer to this category as a set of subcategories, "parents, educators and librarians," "parents, educators and addiction experts," because of their uniting characteristics (Parker-Pope, 2010; Rich, 2007). This category involves those responsible for children, the stewards of information, those that must deal with the consequences of the intense child involvement with the series.

Parents.

Authors used the subcategory of parents:

"Most adults have taken a slight detached, mildly bemused view of the mania. They're happy to see their children reading" (Kennicott, 2003).

"Reports of Hogwarts headaches circulated wildly on the Internet, and no doubt prompted by some parents, already worried about children lugging around 30-pound backpacks" (Williams, 2003).

"But as any parent can attest, the frenzy leading up to the midnight release of the fifth installment of the young wizard's adventures can't be denied" (Harrington-Luecker, 2003).

Often authors used this category by highlighting their own experience as parents:

"For three years, I had dutifully read the 'Harry Potter' series to my daughter" (Charles, 2007).

"This frenzy wasn't created by an ad blitz or a tie-in with McDonald's but by kids like my daughter who loved the books and told their friends about it" (Ignatius, 2000).

Teachers.

Also, a subcategory mentioned included teachers:

"Some years ago, I began the practice of asking students taking my course of the culture of childhood to tell me about the books they bring with them from home to college" (Tatar, 2001).

Guardians.

Authors also used the subcategory of guardians such as librarians or grandparents:

"Children's librarians and booksellers lavishly praise the three previous books" (Donahue, 2000).

"Along with millions of others, my granddaughters Lauren, Nicole and Julia eagerly tore open the boxes containing "Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince" (Broder, 2010).

"The book was still months away from publication in the United States, and I have an 8-year-old grandson who is a big Harry Potter fan" (Blume, 1999).

Media Power.

The category of media power is also invoked in these op-ed pieces. Some authors cite specific categories such as publishing executives, marketers and Scholastic publishing company. Others characterize this category through references to the inhuman, referring to the "hype machine" the "PR wizards" or "the heavy industrial gears of the Harry Potter engine" (Something about Harry, 2000) (Grossman, 2007).

In summary, the public discourse surrounding *Harry Potter* involved two levels of social categories: categories arranged in relation to the text and categories situated around the

relationship to the readers. Within these levels membership categorization devices represented sets of categories including fans, non-participators, stewards and media powers. These devices included categories such as adult fans in the fan device and subcategories such as changed adult readers in the same device. Now that we have an understanding of how categories and subcategories are related to devices that exist in two levels, we can begin to examine how the invocation of social categories is a strategic part of social categorization and social creativity.

Chapter Five

Results and Discussion for RQ2

Strategies.

Authors are interacting in a complex way with these categories. The frequent reference to controversial content and pre-existing social categories (such as parents or fans) suggest that on the one hand, authors are connecting to their audiences and expressing a relationship to the public discourse surrounding the series through these categories. Yet, the specification (through categories such as difference in fan age) and contextual differences (such as a difference in the *reason* readers are interacting with the series in categories such as the casual reader fans) also suggest that the authors are contributing to the definition and use of existing and new social categories. The next question to be asked then, is what are they doing with this interaction? What strategies are they using to interact with these categories and their presentation in public discourse? The next research question discussed, therefore, explores the notion that authors are using social categories strategically.

RQ2: What major strategies are used by the authors in constructing such perceptions?

Op Ed language implies, and requires, the subjective. Authors use positive associations with some social categories to present their own social identities with op ed language. This language suggests, “I am a part of this group, because of these positive characteristics we share” Similarly, authors use negative disassociations with other categories to present their social identities by suggesting “I am not part of this category, they have these negative characteristics that I don’t share”. There are three parts to this communication environment that are influential to these associations and disassociations. First, how authors perceive the audience’s associations and disassociations with the categories is important because they use this to gauge how the

audience will take their presentation of these categories. Second, of course, is the strategic way authors represent their relationship to the social categories they present. Third, the author's relationship to the audience members is the relationship that is overall being negotiated in these op ed language pieces. In sum, authors are concerned with readership, with the majority and minority, with how they perceive the audience's relationship to the categories will influence how they ultimately view the author's social identity. Therefore, these three categories remind one that op ed news pieces, while on the surface represent a one way communication of the author's opinion, are in fact part of discourse because they exist in an environment that influences and indeed dictates language use.

To begin, the relationship between the author and the audience is based on expectations and requirements. The authors are trying to write to a specific audience, trying to draw in readers that the authors perceive have a relationship with the topics and categories they are referencing. Therefore, the expectation created by the authors is an important clue as to how the authors will be either explicitly or implicitly addresses their negative a positive associations and disassociations. Many times it is clear in the titles of these articles that the authors are weighing in on the phenomenon in order to prove a point, offering guidance and evaluation or answering a controversial question. While titles are not always directly related to author purpose, however, they are designed to gather an interested audience and therefore they speak to the ways authors are strategically trying to begin a relationship between the author and the audience. This strategy does not only relate to attracting an audience, however, it also creates an expectation for the perspective. The title is, in itself, an associate and disassociation from social categories it involves. For example, those that are trying to prove a point are often titled thusly:

Protect our kids (Harvey, 2000): This author is positively associating with the category of parents, and thus attracting the audience of parents. This sets the stage for the author to negatively disassociate from Harry Potter fans, a minority view, later on in the article.

Fantasy helps kids cope with real evils (Harrington-Luecker, 2003): Here the author is positively associating with child fans (helps kids) and negatively disassociating from the non-participators that are concerned with the moral messages of the series (*real* evils).

Proud to be a Potterhead (Tahir, 2007): The author positively associates with the category of adult fan by combining (proud) with the playful fan adage (potterhead)

Potter has a Limited Effect on Youngsters' Reading Habits (Rich, 2007): The author is negatively disassociating with the category of the changed child reader (limited effect on yougsters' reading habits).

Others can offer guidance and evaluation and often have titles like (notice that a favorite for connecting with the audience is mirroring the title of the book series Harry Potter and the…):

Harry Potter and the Childish Adult (Byatt, 2003): The author negatively disassociates with the category of the adult fan by adding the adjective (childish).

Harry Potter and Our Forgotten History (Broder, 2005).

'Harry' and The Nation of Dweebs (Stuever, 2001): The author negatively disassociates with the category of fans by referencing the majority fan population as (dweebs).

Harry Potter's kid appeal: Poof positive (Donahue, 1999): The category of child fan is positively associated with through the playfully positively (poof positive) reference.

The strategic in/outgroup language only begins with the titles of pieces, however, which brings us to the next relationship involved in the discourse, that of the relationship between the audience and the categories. As mentioned above, the authors are often using categories that exist in the public discourse already, but in doing this, the author must also work strategically with the way the audience already associates and disassociates *themselves* with those categories. The necessity of considering how the audience relates to social categories causes authors to consider how to approach their own association and disassociation with the categories. This consideration represents a negotiation, authors choose to both explicitly and implicitly present negative and positive associations and disassociations with social categories.

First, explicit and implicit are simple words to explain a complex dance performed by authors. Explicit negative and positive associations and disassociations are the more forthright and easily identifiable, however. Explicit use involves authors' use of positive or negative category adjectives, personal pronoun or first person language that clearly adds positive or negative value to a social category or outright judgments explained about a category. For example, authors use adjectives to explicitly positively and negatively present categories (italics added to highlight adjective use):

"All week long, *luck*y shoppers kept finding books that had mysteriously landed on store shelves – in a Wal-Mart in Canada in a health-food store in Brooklyn" (Jones, 2003): the use of lucky shoppers positively associates with casual readers (consumers) through the use of the adjective lucky.

“The spectacular success of the Harry Potters might help create a *new generation of inveterate* readers” (Quindlen, 2000): the category of the changed reader is positively associated through the use of the words new and inveterate.

“He’s a *bona fide* Potterhead. Victory” (Tahir, 2007): the category of fan is positively associated with through referencing bona fide, which gives legitimacy to the category by suggests there is some criteria or scrutiny

“I see adults reading J.K. Rowling’s books to themselves: perfectly *intelligent, mature* people, poring over “Harry Potter” with nary a child in sight (Charles, 2007): the category of the adult fan is positively associated through the words intelligent and mature.

“Its enough to make a parent *cynical*: Is this a children’s book, or this year’s Pokemon?” (Harrington-Lueker, 2003): the category of the parent is positively associated with through the implication that the author is a parent, while the category of the child fan is negatively disassociated with through the implication that the children’s series is faddish.

“What these *wannabe* J.K.’s are inadvertently highlighting is a very 21st-century debate” (Hesse, 2010): the category of the commentator is negatively disassociated with through the use of the word wannabe.

“With no new novel in the offing, Harry *addicts* will perforce focus their anticipation during the coming year on the film version of the book…In one sense, the boy wizard has slipped beyond her control; he is out there, everywhere, and *legions* of people feel a sense of ownership” (Brahim, 2000): the category of the fan is negatively disassociated with through the use of the negative adjectives (addicts) and (legions) that suggest frenzied or out of control fans.

Authors explicit positive and negative use of categories can also result from more strict us versus them language, through the use of actual pronouns like we, they and us:

“Now, of course, *we* have even more reason for our somewhat smug recognition. For unless *you've* been living a hermit-like existence in one of those New York subway tunnels, you must know that this weekend sees the release of the fourth Harry Potter book” (Hunt, 2000): the category of adult fan is positively associated with through the use of “we” as those that are knowledgeable and participating and “you've” negatively disassociates the non-participator category as those that are out of the loop.

“So take heart, world: *We'll* always have Harry” (Puente, 2010): the category of fan is positively associated with through the use of “we'll” in connected to the ownership or knowledge of the character Harry.

“Do *we* really want *our* kids involved in some of these alternatives? Sure, *we,* want children to read, but the Harry Potter phenomenon presents *us* with a crucial choice” (Harvey, 2000): the category of steward, more specifically parent, is positively associated

with through the expressing good wishes for child education (sure we want children to read) and responsibility (a crucial choice).

These quotes show explicit positive and negative in/outgroup category use, as authors clearly use us versus them language. And finally, authors also explicitly use positive and negative associations using themselves and their own detailed evaluations of those categories. For instance:

"Finally my daughter has discovered the interior joy of reading. And I'm thankful that she's passed it on to me" (Dickinson, 1999): the category of parent is positively associated with and connected to the positively associated with changed adult reader (the adult reader that has been "turned on" to harry potter through their status as parent of a child fan)

"What is it like? Why the clothes? I don't quite understand some of the more thoughtful answers about the second coming of Moses and Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. But I know Harry Potter, even if I never saw its Jewish significance" (Thornburgh, 2008): the category of adult fan is positively associated with through the personal knowledge of Harry Potter in the face of other cultural boundaries.

"Wishing to avoid that fate myself, let me be clear that I haven't the slightest idea what happens on Page 759 of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows"; I never got past page 10 of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone." Personally, I could care less about the fate of the neurotic boy wizard…our obsession with spoilers has a diminishing effect, reducing popular criticism to a kind of glorified consumer reporting and the audience to babies"

> (Lee, 2007): the category of critic is positively associated with through the reference to popular criticism and the authors critical language while the category of the fan is negatively disassociated with through the first reference to themselves (personally, I could care less) in juxtaposition to the majority (our obsession with spoilers).

These explicit examples make it fairly clear to see how authors are either negatively or positively associating with categories. Implicit associations, however, are more complicated. Implicit category references are often embedded in the context of the article, and become clear through repetitive implicit reference, or come to light only in reference to other pieces of the article in question. Just as is the case with explicit references though, implicit associations and disassociations can be negative and positive.

> "In the last analysis, it's hard not to agree with Rowling's own assessment – that the accusation of Satanism is "lunatic."' (Miller, 2007): the category of non-participators that object to the religious messages is negatively disassociated with through the agreement with the word lunatic.

> "There is something inherently odd about considering the sex lives of fictional characters in children's books…But J.K. Rowling has forced such considerations upon us with her announcement that Albus Dumbledore, the beloved headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, is gay" (Gerson, 2010): the category of non-participator is positively associated with through the use of "us" as those that are forced to consider the series and its intricate character lives.

"Publishers agree that Harry will be missed" (Blais, 2007): the positively associated with the category of fan (will be missed) also positively associated with the category of media powers is positively associated with through the implication that the media powers agree.

In the first quote, Miller is not outright negatively disassociating with the non-participators that are making judgments about the religious messages in Harry Potter, instead relating the negative (lunatic) disassociation (it's hard not to agree) through another (Rowling's). Similarly, Gerson confesses feeling odd knowing intimate details about the characters in the series (a quality fans generally feel comfortable with, as evidenced by extensive fan fiction love stories) and later negatively disassociates himself from that category by referencing "us" as those that are forced to deal with the thought {which category is author thus placing self in – critic and below money maker – and which is he disassociating – fan and many of the others}. Blais implicitly positively associates with the media power category by referencing the publishers as in agreement with the implied "us" category that will be missing *Harry* (fans).

Whether authors are choosing to explicitly or implicitly associate and disassociate with these categories is a matter of strategic language use. The strategic choice still involves more than their own associations and disassociations with these categories; it is, in part, the relationship between the audience and the categories and their expectations Therefore, when discussing why an author would negatively disassociate with one category, then later (seemingly contradictorily) positively associate with the same category, it is helpful to consider that two strategic moves such as those may be in collusion with one another rather than at odds. This is consistent with the strategy of social creativity, in which intragroup comparisons attempt to redefine the negative dimensions of comparison to be more positive and create new dimensions of comparison (Harwood, 2005). It cannot be discounted that especially in the case of op ed

pieces, that do not necessarily have the urgency of reporting new information that front page news benefits from, these authors have to tread more lightly upon audience sympathies. An article that is not necessarily in the editorial section, yet is rife with op ed language, may require more careful treatment of author opinion that is at odds with the majority. Similarly, articles that create an expectation that they attempt to prove a point or answer a controversial question (as referenced above by the titles discussed) must first reason with the majority audience, as the sources examined are all of nationwide circulation. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that author purpose needs to be considered contextually by examining the way strategic category association and disassociations work together in an article. In this way, authors exhibit social creativity by presenting categories (and the new divisions they might present within those categories) to audience members.

One way authors use social creativity is to either shed light on the "reality" of a social category that exists in the public discourse or to create divisions in those categories to highlight that the authors find there to be more than one category at work.

Placement of such statements is often important within the article. Often the author presents the category first, implicitly offers some evidence against their initial assessment, and then ends the argument by refuting that first impression. For example:

> "For all, sexuality has become an issue. Dumbledore is, as his creator, J.K. Rowling, asserted at Carnegie Hall, gay"
>
> "Ms. Rowling may think of Dumbledore as gay, but there is no reason why anyone else should" (Rothstein, 2007).

Rothstein first identifies positively with the concerned majority by using the word “all”. This recognizes the importance of such an issue for the audience and is therefore a valid one by virtue of the numbers of those concerned. He then goes on to provide evidence of what a gay fictional character should mean to the audience, finally reaching his negative disassociation with “anyone”. Similarly:

> “In what has become near mythology about the wildly popular series by J.K Rowling, many parents, teachers, librarians, and booksellers have credited it with inspiring a generation of kids to read for pleasure in a world dominated by instant messaging and music downloads”

> “Educators agree that the series can’t get the job done alone” (Rich, 2007).

The author Rich positively associates with the changed child reader by applauding the book for “inspiring a generation of kids” contextually “in a world dominated by instant messaging”. Later on, however, Rich negatively disassociates from the category of the changed child reader however, by referencing those educators that disagree in “agreement’ that this is not a lasting social category.

Several authors even use this social creativity strategy to create an air of “confessing” their minority status to their readers as a way of negotiating that relationship between the categories and the audience. For example:

> “I was a somewhat reluctant Potter convert. I found Rowling’s prose style clunky…and her storytelling workmanlike in the early books”

> "I cried at the end of "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows" It's a rare thing, an instant classic that earns it catharsis honestly, not through hype of sentiment but through the author's vision and hard work. One gets the feelings that J.K. Rowling is as relieved and joyous as we are to read this point at least that she's grown and suffered and struggled through the last 10 years, just like Harry. Just like us" (Hand, 2007).

Here, the author Hand first negatively disassociates with the adult *Harry* fan, admitting to her presumably fan or friend readership that she did not like the prose. Yet, goes on to end her article by positively associate with the group again, using "us" and "we" language while she positively associates with the emotions of the social category of the adult fan.

There are even situations in which the author uses this strategy of refutation through the use of sarcasm. One author introduces himself as negatively disassociating himself from the category of the friend of *Harry* when he writes:

> "DID I have the chance to buy the first "Harry Potter" manuscript? Yes. Do I regret it? Not for a second" (Kenney, 2010)

Yet the same author spends the majority of the article refuting this claim by expounding upon his situation in which his life fell in ruin and while always using the veneer of sarcasm he ends his article with a scenario in which he clearly regrets his subsequent firing, divorce, court orders and new job as a fish scaler and thus positively associates with the friend of *Harry* category:

> "They laugh at me sometimes. Something they grab me roughly by the head and give me a "noogie." It hurts. They call me "Book Boy." I don't mind, I'm where I want to be. Break is over now. There are fish to scale" (Kenney, 2010)

Another refutation strategy used by authors is to "correct" the perception of social categories. They often present a social category as though they are in agreement with a majority (as though

speaking to the majority readers), then go on to refute that category by showing that not all those belonging to the category are characterized in the same way. For instance, when one author identifies with the majority, then goes on to reveal that the "we" are not all necessarily fans, and there are, in fact, the "rest of us" that are not:

> "The entire nation is officially, helplessly besotted. Young and old --- we all love Harry. All that magic! All that imagination! Whee!"
>
> "The next grown-up caught promoting Harry Potter to the rest of us better be ready to meet outside, after school, by the playground fence. Harry Potter is about a lot of things, and most of all he's about needing his butt kicked" (Stuever, 2001).

Or when another author begins to identify with the parents, characterized by a concern over the media frenzy, then goes on to say that as a parent she is actually a fan of the series for good reason:

> "Did I mention that the real marketing blitz – the one involving billboards and profession baseball games – will begin *after* the book is on the shelves? It's enough to make a parent cynical: Is this a children's book, or this year's Pokemon?"
>
> "It isn't shrew marketing alone that explains the fervor. In a media environment saturated with death, violence, war and crime, the age-old lure of magic and fantasy beckons with the promise to make things whole, to vanquish evil, to replace danger and disaster with victory…children work things through with fantasy…the magical life at Hogwarts fulfills just that need…" (Harrington-Luecker, 2003).

Whether implicit or explicit, whether negative or positive, these social categories are being used by authors to present a social identity through op ed language. Through this strategic negotiation of author with social categories and their audience, authors are presenting their social identities in this environment of public discourse, whether they judge it to be a hostile or sympathetic one.

The organization of these categories around *Harry Potter* can be described as an ecosystem. Together, categories fit into a set of membership categorization devices in the *Harry Potter* culture. The social categories and device have implications for other relationships. Relationships mean the implications based situating one category in relation to another based on its characteristics and behaviors. This is the last step involved in the social meaning making of social identity theory. Social categories are proliferated in public discourse, individuals categorize themselves and others based on those categories. The categories are arranged into sets, membership categorization devices, and those devices create rules for membership to and exclusion from some categories. If someone takes one role, such as that of an anti-participating non-participator, he/she cannot also claim membership as an adult fan. However, taking the role of a knowledgeable non-participating critic is not mutually exclusive to an adult fan. Understanding these relationships helps to synthesize the process of social identity with convergence media's cultural presence. In the following chapter we will examine some of the ways categories work together to form this ecosystem, as well as what conclusions we can draw about stereotypes, identities, categories and what we can learn about the broader *Harry Potter* culture from analysis of this ecosystem.

In order to describe the ecosystem of how membership categorization devices fit categories into sets that interact with each other, we can outline what categories have implications for others and what those implications are.

For example, fans are directly related to the *Harry Potter* text, yet the subcategories of children and adults fans also have a relationship to each other. When authors identifying themselves with the category of adult fan, they also must address their relationship to the category of critic. These authors are writing for a news source, and must defend the importance of their published place in public discourse. Sometimes this means that they create a relationship to critics defensively. For example, one author identifies as a "bona fide Potterhead" but goes on to explain her own experience as an adult fan and her conflict with the category of the critic. She writes:

> "Is it, as so many critics say, just escapism? An addiction to cotton-candy reading? Yes, it has its light moments, but the Potter series isn't all fluff" (Tahir, 2007).

She is, therefore, situating herself as an adult fan relative to her perception of the characteristics of the category of critic as someone who thinks the series is escapism or fluff. She goes on to write:

> "As I've read and reread the books, I've been reminded of some important things. That the world isn't divided in not only good and evil, but that there are all kinds of people in between - - with all kinds of stories That you shouldn't just fight for truth and justice, but hold you head high as you do it. That love is infinitely powerful and infinitely complex as well. And that you should never forget what is it like to be young" (Tahir, 2007).

Her explanation uses the relationship of adult fans versus critics to expound on her membership to the subcategory of changed adult reader by describing the lessons she learned from the books

and describing the category bound activity qualifications, remembering what it is like to be young, of membership to that subcategory.

On the flip side, one author describes his status as a critic and anti-participator through confessing that he belonged to the category of parent yet not to fan. He used the relationship of parent to relate his membership to the category of critic as separate from the adult fan. For example, he begins his article explaining how he read the series to his daughter for three years until, he writes:

> "And that's when my daughter broke the spell: ""Do we have to keep reading this?"" O, the shame of it: a 10-year old girl and a book critic who had had enough of "Harry Potter". We were both a little sad, but also a little relieved. Although we'd had some good times at Hogwarts, deep down we weren't wild about Harry, and the freedom of finally confession this secret to each other made us feel like co-conspirators." (Charles, 2007).

However, he then relates his experience as a parent and critic to qualify himself as an anti-participator by negatively stereotyping the changed adult reader. He writes:

> "I'd like to think that this a romantic return to youth, but it looks like a bad case of cultural infantilism. And when we're not horning in on our kids' favorite books, most of us aren't reading anything at all. More than half the adults in this country won't pick up a novel this year, according to the National Endowment of the Arts. Not One. And the rate of decline has almost tripled in the past decade" (Charles, 2007).

Authors do not only employ categories that apply to their own age group, such as adult fan and critic. Because this convergence media crosses generations, adults must negotiate the roles children have in the consumption of *Harry Potter*. This positioning is important because

they must relate the category of child fan, which they do not belong to, yet often characterize and describe category bound activities for, through their own membership to related categories. Child fans do not exist in a world alone, they are interrelated with parents and guardians. Those parents or guardians may be adult fans, and therefore members of the fan category with children.

For example, one author negatively stereotypes the child fan category by identifying positively with the category of parent but negatively with disassociating with adult fans. He writes:

> "The entire nation is officially, helplessly besotted. Young and old – we all love Harry. All that magic! All that imagination! Whee!. Enough. Here is a warning flare that is long overdue: America, your kids are have come major dweebs….We told our children that it was best to be smart, kind, open-minded—and yes, that was a good thing. We encouraged their obsession with dinosaurs, planetary physics, recycling, the trombone, mathletics, Achievement camp. But it went too far. Is it any wonder that kids today come out so incredibly dorky, that Harry Potter would be the 21st-century version of cool?" (Stuever, 2001).

He goes on to negatively stereotype child fans by writing:

> "But back to the problem: What to do with a nation of little nerds running around with capes and wands? Should we be more concerned? Is there a coolness shortage coming?"

Therefore, this author is negotiating the relationships among several categories, (parents, child fans, anti-participators) in order to assert his own social identity.

The negotiating of relationships is clearly not defined to relationships within the devices present in the discourse, those of fans, non-participators, stewards and media power. For

example, one author uses stereotypes of child fans to characterize media power categories and their relationship to child and adult fan categories. She writes:

> "You leap from between your Harry Potter sheets, check the date on your Harry Potter wall calendar and the time on your Golden Snitch wrist watch. Oops – be careful no tot slip on the Harry Potter Uno cards you left scattered across the floor last night. Slip into a Harry Potter T-shirt. Splash, splash – clean up with Hermione Exploding Apple Body Wash, Transforming Cherry Hand Soap and your Harry Potter toothbrush. Oww! You just stepped on a piece of your little brother's Harry Potter lego. Gulp down some milk from a Hermione mug, sneak a cookie from the Hagrid and Friends Cookie Jar and off you go. Will any real kid actually be this thoroughly Potter-ized? Probably not. But as the opening day of "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone" approaches, stores are filled with Harry Potter toys, clothes and assorted stuff – several hundred different kinds of Potter items in all." (Kastor, 2001).

The author goes on to describe how the categories of media power, child fans and adult fans have relationships to the text and the status of an emerging piece of convergence media:

> "The film executives worried that if they went too far, all the kids who loved J.K. Rowling's books would get sick of Harry Potter long before the release of the next movie, "Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets." They also knew that some kids and adults feel very protective of Harry and don't want him to become just another face on an advertisement" (Kastor, 2001).

Finally, the author positively associates with fans and negatively disassociates with the media power through subtly describing category bound activities for the fan by writing,

> "Of course, you can enjoy all the cool things – the flying broomsticks and chocolate frogs and Rememberalls – anytime you want, at no cost. Just open one of the books and read." (Kastor, 2001).

These are just a few very specific examples of the way social categorization and social creativity among membership categorization devices involves a complex negotiating of the relationships among the roles, characteristics and stereotypes. We will now cover what more general conclusions can be drawn about social identity in the public discourse about *Harry Potter*.

Chapter Six

General Discussion.

We have now seen what specific social categories authors use (such as fans and non-participators, stewards and media powers), how those social categories fit into sets to form membership categorization devices, how authors employ strategies through social creativity and finally how this process is social identification. Authors create social identities such as a knowledgeable non-fan commentator and voice of dissent against ignorant reviews or a non-participating non-commentating adult. These identities represent a placement among the relationships present between membership categorization devices; devices that exist in a convergence culture.

Jenkins (2006) reminds us that convergence media, such as *Harry Potter* represents what he calls a public problem. This means that the transition from old media to new media is one that happens in an environment of public tension. This evaluation rings true for the *Harry Potter* series, which was heavily contextualized by controversy. It is also true that much of the public discourse represented by the mass media tapped into these controversies in order to connect to readers. The discourse also supported Jenkins' (2006) evaluation that the series, as a piece of convergence media, experienced the tension over what a book (old media) means as it becomes convergence media (movies, fan fiction etc.). His summarization of the way this affects convergence culture is supported by the results of this research. He writes:

> We can read this debate as a reaction against many of the properties of convergence culture we have seen so far – against the expansion of fictional realms across multiple media, against the desire to master the arcane details of these texts and turn them into resources for a more participator culture. For some the concern is with the specific

> content of those fantasies – whether they are consistent with a Christian worldview. For others, the concern is with the marketing of those fantasies to children – whether we can opportunities for participation to be commodified. (p. 216)

The results of this study support this conclusion and show the contextualization of the public discourse in the properties of convergence culture that creates a debate. Authors often tried to show they were representing the opinions of the masses, answering their questions about the supposed problems this convergence media brought with it, or scrutinized it as a piece of popular culture. However, while the discourse showed that the authors of these mass media pieces built upon the context of controversies, they did not end up showing patterns associated strictly with the controversial aspects. Instead, the interaction created a map of social categories and strategies with *Harry Potter* at the center.

This map, though by no means static, has implications for who has the right to participate in convergence culture and on what terms. There are stereotypes, or judgments implicit with social categories, being developed based on the convergence culture surrounding *Harry Potter*. The child fan is a stereotype, as anyone writing about this group that is an author in these publications is not a member and yet is still dictating who child fans are and how they act. They are making judgments about what effect the series has on the child fan, that children are bewitched and obsessed or that they are transformed from the derelict video gamer to educated readers for like. Similarly, results showed that stereotypes are created concerning adult fans, that they are childish adults who must defend their interaction with the series through referencing the quality of writing and relevance of its themes or accessing it through their relationship to child fans. Stereotypes exist concerning critics, who are often characterized as those that just cannot get on board with the rest the crowd and are the buzz kill to the joy *Harry Potter* brings. Similar

stereotypes exist concerning the role of the anti-participator, who were granted access to the public discourse through the publication of a few mass media articles supporting the opinion that something was dangerous or wrong with the series, yet were still overwhelmingly stereotyped as the blind and god fearing fanatics. These stereotypes and the aforementioned identities that authors presented represent how this map of interaction creates rules for interaction (Sacks, 1992).

First, these relationships dictate that one cannot occupy the role of fan while simultaneously identifying as a member of the anti-participating category. If an author holds the opinion that the series has dangerous moral message, that author cannot also use their status as a steward to identify with child fans. There are boundaries created among the roles these social categories represent based on someone's relationship to the text and their relationship to the readers of the text.

Second, they also have implications for behavior and cognition. They create expectations such as for how an adult fan must act defensively, or how a parent must consider the opinions of anti-participators if they are responsible, good parents. Similarly, the characterizations of groups presents a way for other to think about those groups. From the outside, any time a scholarly name tag is attached to opinion editorial language, it appears that those opinions are credible or well supported, however, an adult fan with extensive knowledge and participation with the series has not credibility because membership to that group is characterized by infantile behavior or simplistic thought processes by those adult non-fans.

To generalize, the discourse was, for the majority, not very negative. Consistent with its status as a piece of *popular* culture, the authors generally supported its popularity. While some authors explicitly evaluated the series negatively based on the membership categorization

devices at work, the majority positively presented the series and its participants. Similarly, the discourse revealed that social categorization is arranged around parent's concern for children's well being, and the qualifications that turn *Harry Potter* into a resource for a participatory culture. One important feature of this arrangement, however, is that while controversies provided a context for the social categorization, they did not restrict the social categories at work. While authors often used controversies to attract readers or establish the importance of their own piece, social categorization in the discourse surrounding *Harry Potter* often dealt with less timely categories such as those of the scholar, the parent or the religious zealot. This means that while Jenkins (2006) assessment of the inevitable controversial treatment of convergence media was supported, it does not limit the conclusions of this study to one convergence media piece in particular. This is important to understanding how this study's conclusions about social categories may be relevant to other convergence media.

Finally, the conclusions we draw about the social identity process in the public discourse surrounding *Harry Potter* has implications for examining other pop culture phenomenon. The major contribution of this research is to articulate that this set of membership categorization devices around convergent media is applicable for other convergent media. For example, at the time of this study Avatar (2010) is the highest grossing movie of all time. Placing sometime like the highest grossing movie of all time, at the center of this process of social identity would yield similar analytical results. For example, we would find similar social categories, fans, non-participators, media power. The content would also be contextualized by ideological debate, in the case of Avatar by such topics as environmentalism and colonialism. Finally, social identity would progress in a similar negotiation of the way an individual must categorize those around

them as well as themselves while at the same time being embedded in membership categorization devices based on the interaction of those social categories.

Limitations.

If I could have changed anything about this study, I would have incorporated geography in my analysis. By this I mean I would have included a more microanalysis of culture and community implications more specifically to regions in the United States by including publications from the east coast, west coat, Midwest, north and south. Similarly, I would have liked to include other countries in my analysis, considering the series started in England and has a huge global impact. The translation of the series and the way it entered and influences global cultures is a rich site to understanding social meaning creation that other scholars have already begun to identify, yet I did not cover in this study due to my limitations in terms of time and scope.

Given more time and resources I would also have liked to add more analysis of the fan culture surrounding the series. My analysis of the way fan groups are presented in mass media would have benefited from the inclusion of actual fan publications, forum posts, and interviews with fan site creators etc. Many in the fan group have received book deals or endorsements from J.K Rowling herself, and it would be interesting to understand how the depth of the fan groups in terms of those that dropped their other interests to create a career from their fan participation as well as the breadth of the group in terms of the thousands upon thousands that post and participate on fan sites. New technology is an important aspect of convergence media, and I would have liked to add this dimension of Internet fan involvement to the study. I feel like these additions would help me access the areas of social identity theory that deal with social mobility

and social competition by accessing the wider variety of participants and voices that contribute to the *Harry Potter* culture through actions and behaviors, as well as discourse.

If I could change anything about the way the study was done I would have liked to have done more analysis of the categories present in the discourse during the collection and coding process. My analysis of the categories was constantly revised during the process of writing up my results and discussion chapters because I was forced to reconsider the boundaries of the categories I identified during coding and collection. The coding process would have benefited from additional readings of the articles, possibly two or three, prior to the actual identity of social categories in order to get a clearer picture of the characterizations of categories exhibited by the authors.

I would also have changed the design of the study in the beginning in order to try to incorporate a small sample of interviews with authors of the pieces if they could be contacted. I think the analysis of the results would have benefited from the additional dimension of personal identity as a context for the social identities being analyzed in the discourse. While this was not the aim of my study because I was primarily concerned with social patterns rather than personal identity, social identity theory does provide some theoretical insights into personal identity that I would have liked to explore.

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Appendix A

Coding Sheet Example.

Categories:

UF: Unspecified Fans
CF: Child Fans
AF: Adult Fans
CCR: Changed Child Readers
CAR: Changed Adult Readers
P: Parents/Guardians/Educators
FoH: Friends of Harry
SR: Sensational Reader or Casual Reader/Consumers
S: Scholars
C: Commentators/Critics
NP: Non-participators
MP: Media Power
T: Teens

Topics:

Money
Popularity
Moral Messages
Religious Messages
Quality of Children's Literature
Gender Appeal

Strategies:

+: positive association
-: negative disassociation
0: neutral
Ex: explicit language
Im: implicit language

Appendix B

Data Set References.

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