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Ingram, Joanne; Luckett, Zoe

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My friend Harry's a wizard:

Predicting parasocial interaction with characters from fiction

Joanne Ingram[1]   &   Zoe Luckett[2]

[1]School of Media, Culture and Society, University of the West of Scotland

[2]Department of Psychology, University of Bedfordshire

Correspondence to:

Joanne Ingram

Department of Psychology

University of the West of Scotland

Paisley Campus

Paisley

PA1 2BE

joanne.ingram@uws.ac.uk

+44 (0)141 849 4429

Abstract

We explored parasocial interactions with characters from a narrow range of books and movies, namely those featuring the character 'Harry Potter'. Following research which suggests that parasocial interactions are multidimensional, we investigated which personality, reading and viewing motives, predicted four dimensions of parasocial interaction with characters in the 'Harry Potter' series. The pattern of significant predictors indicated that interpersonal aspects of reading (neuroticism, reading for companionship) and sociable aspects of movie viewing (openness, agreeableness, extraversion, and viewing to be sociable) lead to greater experience of the dimensions of parasocial interaction. We suggest that these factors relate to the availability of interactive media and experiences surrounding this series; and, the series representing mainstream rather than subcultural media. Results support the suggestion that parasocial interaction is multidimensional; and demonstrate that factors predicting these dimensions may vary dependent on the medium in which the favoured persona is presented, or on the identity of the favoured persona.

Keywords: Parasocial; Parasocial Interaction; Harry Potter; Personality; Motives

Public Significance Statement

Readers of *Harry Potter* books and viewers of movies were shown to have one-sided 'relationships' with characters from the series. Such relationships may form because readers want someone to relate to, and because viewers want to be sociable. These relationships are potentially driven by the extent of immersive multi-media surrounding *Harry Potter*, and by the mainstream status of the series.

My friend Harry's a wizard:

Predicting parasocial interaction with characters from fiction

Parasocial interaction (PSI) was initially conceptualised as a one-sided relationship which an audience member may hold with a television personality (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Focusing on media personalities, such as game show hosts or interviewers, Horton and Wohl outlined different characteristics which could make up such a relationship. Such characteristics include a level of intimacy experienced outside of viewing time, role adoption, non-mutual and non-dialectic communication. Building on these characteristics, a range of research has been carried out assessing the PSIs people engage in with different non-fiction and fiction media personalities; including radio presenters, news readers and soap opera characters. Within this article, we look at PSIs formed with characters featured in books and movies. We have restricted the range of personalities under consideration by requesting participants consider a PSI in relation to a character in a specific series of movies and books – namely those involving the character Harry Potter. We assess the involvement of personality traits in forming a PSI with characters from these movies and books, and identify motives for viewing and reading considering a uses and gratifications perspective. In examining some of the factors which lead to the formation of a PSI with a character from the Harry Potter series we also provide support for the assertion that PSI is a multidimensional construct (Tsay & Bodine, 2012).

Parasocial Interaction as a Multidimensional Construct

The Parasocial Interaction Scale (PSI Scale) was developed by Rubin, Perse and Powell (1985) to assess interpersonal relationships, with media personalities, which are one-sided and developed through viewing of the personality over time. Specifically, this scale addressed engagement in PSIs with personalities involved in news programming. The scale

was later adapted and used to examine the effects and causes of PSIs with soap opera characters (Perse & Rubin, 1989), TV characters and personalities (Auter, 1992; Conway & Rubin, 1991; Rubin & McHugh, 1987), and TV shopping personalities (Grant, Gunthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991). More recently Tsay and Bodine (2012) noted that the changing nature of media and mass communication allowed for a greater level of interaction with characters or personalities. Engagement in online behaviours such as fan groups, Twitter, and character blogs, allows audiences a greater level of interaction with their favoured personae. Online engagement encourages audience members to be active agents in their own media experiences (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974), to a greater extent than initially conceived by the uses and gratifications approach. The effects of such interaction may not have been evident in a single measure. Tsay and Bodine (2012) developed a revised version of Rubin et al's (1985) scale which assessed PSI as a multidimensional construct; and, within this study, we use a modified version of Tsay and Bodine's scale to provide further support for the consideration of PSI as a multidimensional construct. These authors identified four distinct dimensions of parasocial interaction which address engagement with media characters from affective, cognitive and behavioural perspectives. These are: *guidance* - where the participant may look upon the character as a role model or for advice; *face-to-face desire* – where the participant wishes to communicate with the character; *intimacy* – where the participant wishes to learn more about the character; and *familiarity* – the degree of knowledge or familiarity a participant has with the character. Within their study Tsay and Bodine (2012) investigated the relationship of the four dimensions they identified to personality. In addition, they addressed uses and gratifications of media engagement by examining interpersonal needs and motives for TV viewing. These authors noted that increased interactivity and user control means it is easier than ever for people to use media for gratification of their needs. Within the current paper, we have built on the work of Tsay and Bodine by assessing PSI as a

multidimensional construct as they suggested is necessary. In doing so, we have identified a specific series, featuring the character 'Harry Potter', which provides users with the opportunity for a high level of interactivity, and control over their engagement.

The Harry Potter Series

We have looked at the relationship between personality and motives, in relation to the four dimensions of a PSI, whilst asking participants to select a favourite character of a more specific nature than previous research. That is, a character who features in the seven original books and/or eight movies which feature the character 'Harry Potter'. This criterion allowed for an interesting addition to the body of literature on PSIs. The fictional world of the character 'Harry Potter' allowed us to examine PSIs with characters in a way which is rarely possible for most other media of this type. The physical length of the unfolding story, spanning eight movies or seven books, allows consumers to engage in more depth with characters. The time taken for the story to unfold, books were released over 10 years from 1997 to 2007 and movies were released over 9 years between 2002 and 2011[1], ensured viewers and readers who became interested in the earlier instalments were kept engaged with the characters across a long period of time. A person reading the first book close to its release date and watching the final movie close to its release date would have remained engaged with this series for 14 years. Previous research has assessed PSIs with television characters who are on the screen for a prolonged period (Hoffner & Cohen 2012: Tuckachinsky, 2011), and with characters from a series of movies (Stever 2009). Parasocial relationships with the character Harry Potter alone have been assessed cross-culturally, with social attraction being the most important factor in development of such a relationship for both collective and individualistic cultures (Schmid & Klimmt, 2011). But, to our knowledge, examination of

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[1] The seven official books involving the character Harry Potter were written by J.K. Rowling and published in the U.K. by Bloomsbury Children's Books and in the U.S. by Scholastic. The rights to the eight Harry Potter movies are held by Time Warner Incorporated, and these movies were distributed by Warner Bros.

engagement in PSIs with a range of characters from both books and movies has yet to be investigated.

There are, of course, other books and movies which could be examined in the same way, for example those within *The Lord of the Rings* series. But there is an additional aspect of the Harry Potter series which increases its relevance to discussions of developing mass communication. This is the level of behavioural involvement (Tsay & Bodine, 2012) which 'Harry Potter' consumers can engage in. Rather than being restricted to viewing or reading the finite selection of official stories, these consumers can gain further access to their favourite characters through official websites (e.g., www.pottermore.com, harrypotter.warnerbros.co.uk) and unofficial websites (e.g., www.mugglenet.com, harrypotter.scholastic.com). Consumers can discuss the activities of their favourite characters using social media, and, they can create further adventures for their favourite characters on fan fiction websites (e.g., www.harrypotterfanfiction.com). In addition, consumers are able to move beyond the use of media devices and engage in an interactive experience by visiting either The Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios in Orlando and California, or The Warner Bros Studio Tour London featuring the Making of Harry Potter. These attractions allow consumers to physically connect with the fictional world which makes up part of the Harry Potter story. Although the attractions do not involve engagement with specific characters, the ability to place one's self within the fictional world of a character will likely affect any PSI a consumer experiences with their favourite character.

The additional elements of fans engagement with Harry Potter makes assessment of the personality, and motivational, factors which predict the different dimensions of PSI interesting and important. Interactive elements may encourage some fans to instrumentally engage with the series, and characters within the series. Engagement for goal-oriented, as

opposed to habitual, use and gratification will likely lead to different profiles of personality and motivations which predict different dimensions of PSI. For example, a profile of personality and motivational factors which predicts high *face-to-face desire* may indicate a group of fans likely to engage in behavioural aspects such as visiting physical attractions. We assessed the levels of *guidance*, *face-to-face desire*, *intimacy* and *familiarity* which are predicted by consumer's personality, motives for reading Harry Potter books, and motives for viewing Harry Potter films.

Personality and Parasocial Interaction

Previously, differences in personality were shown to vary the influence of media on individuals, as well as to vary how individuals use media (Lachlan & Maloney, 2008; Nabi & Riddle, 2008; Shim & Paul, 2007). Differences in personality may also vary an individual's pursuit of intimacy, and approach to relationships (Sanderson, Rahm & Beigbeder, 2005). The association of personality to PSI was assessed by Tsay and Bodine (2012) in specific relation to the four dimensions they outlined. Findings indicated that neuroticism was a predictor of the *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity* dimensions, and was positively associated with all four dimensions. Extraversion did not predict or associate with any of the four dimensions. Findings involving neuroticism and extraversion were both contrary to the original hypotheses; it was initially thought that those high in neuroticism would not engage in PSIs as they are less likely to gain satisfaction from interpersonal communication. The results suggest that PSIs may act as a functional alternative to face-to-face interactions; with those high in neuroticism using PSIs for interpersonal gratification through vicarious experiences (Wang, Fink & Cai, 2008). Extraversion was expected to be positively associated with PSIs as those high in extraversion are likely to enjoy mediated relationships in the same manner as they enjoy face-to-face relationships. The lack of relationship between

extraversion and PSI dimensions suggests individuals high in extraversion prefer to seek social gratification through face-to-face as opposed to mediated interactions (Finn, 1997). The openness and agreeableness personality traits did not predict any of the PSI dimensions, but, both were negatively correlated with intimacy, suggesting individuals high in these traits are less likely to perceive their favourite personalities as intimately close to them. This is attributed to the additional richness and stimulation provided by face-to-face interaction (Trevino, Lengel & Daft, 1987) as opposed to PSIs. Due to the surprising nature of Tsay and Bodine's results in relation to personality; and as the focus of this research was on characters who are portrayed in a broad range of mediums, we initially put forward two non-directional hypotheses regarding personality.

> *H1*: There will be a relationship between levels of extraversion and PSIs when considering characters from the 'Harry Potter' series.
>
> *H2*: There will be a relationship between levels of neuroticism and PSIs when considering characters from the 'Harry Potter' series.

We do not put forward directional hypotheses based on the results of Tsay and Bodine, or on their initial predictions. This is because if PSI is multidimensional construct then the relationship of the dimensions to personality is likely to vary dependent on the target of the PSI.

Reading and Viewing Motives and Parasocial Interaction

A range of motives which drive individuals to seek gratification from TV were outlined by Rubin (1983). These motives included active strategies, such as escaping from everyday stress, seeking pleasure, or relaxation; and passive strategies, such as to pass-the-time or because of habit. Under the uses and gratifications perspective individuals use of

media is directed by their conscious awareness of their needs and motivations for engagement, and their awareness of opportunities for engagement (Donohew, Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1987; Katz, et al., 1974). The readily available nature of current media (e.g., on demand viewing, viewing or reading on hand held devices, widespread internet access) may influence consumer's motives for engagement. Watching out of habit, or to pass-the-time, may be less relevant when the availability of alternatives is greater; therefore, active strategies for engagement with the Harry Potter series are likely to be related to PSI dimensions.

Tsay and Bodine (2012) found that watching TV for escape was a predictor of *guidance* and *intimacy* dimensions; watching TV for pleasure was a predictor of *guidance*, *face-to-face desire* and *familiarity*. Watching for escape may likely relate to the positive relationship of PSIs to neuroticism. Anxious individuals may be more likely to use media personalities and characters as a form of escape. A relationship between a PSI and watching to relax was also found, and suggests that the experience of a PSI is a positive one. People may resort to mediated communication to gratify interpersonal needs (Knobloch-Westerwick & Alter, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 1985), leading to PSI acting as an alternative to a face-to-face relationship. However, rather than find a PSI distressing due to its differences with a face-to-face relationship, those engaging in PSIs find it a relaxing and enjoyable experience. Although fans are able to engage in the 'Harry Potter' series in a range of different ways, the current study specifically addressed motivations for reading books and viewing movies. Therefore, we expected that the active motives for TV viewing determined above will be reflected in the motives for viewing movies and reading books from the 'Harry Potter' series. We put forward three hypotheses related to motivations for reading and viewing:

H3: Reading or viewing for entertainment will predict dimensions of PSI.

H4: Reading or viewing to escape will predict dimensions of PSI.

H5: Reading or viewing to relax will predict dimensions of PSI.

Method

Participants and Procedure

A total of 1868 participants, ranging in age from 18 to 84 (mean age = 25.41, SD = 9.51 median age = 22, mode age= 22), completed an online questionnaire using Qualtrics Online Survey Software, http://www.qualtrics.com/. The link to the survey was posted on social networking sites (Facebook and Twitter), as well as on a popular relevant website; www.mugglenet.com. Participants were asked to consider their favourite character from the 'Harry Potter' series before answering questions on the Parasocial Interaction Scale. Participants then completed a personality questionnaire. Participants were then asked if they based their responses to the PSI Scale on a character's behaviour as detailed in the 'Harry Potter' series of books, the 'Harry Potter' series of movies or a combination of both. Depending on their response participants completed a questionnaire assessing their reading motives, their viewing motives, or both. Participants then detailed how many times they had read each of the seven books in the 'Harry Potter' series and how many times they had viewed each of the eight movies in the 'Harry Potter' series. All participants were asked to explicitly confirm that they were over the age of eighteen, participants provided their age and date of birth to further verify this. All participants stated their first language was English. The participant pool consisted of 238 males and 1630 females; participant nationalities were as follows – American (63%), British (21%), Canadian (7%), Australian (7%), New Zealand (1%) and South African (1%).

Measures

Parasocial Interaction.

In order to examine the four dimensions of PSI, specifically with a character from the 'Harry Potter' series, we used a 28 item Parasocial Interaction Scale detailed by Tsay and Bodine (2012). Items in the scale were divided into four subscales representing the four dimensions indicated by previous authors, we also collected data for 10 additional items which were unloaded in Tsay and Bodine's study, these were excluded from further analysis. The first dimension was *guidance*– where the participant may look upon the character as a role model or for advice; items for this dimension included *"I feel good when I turn to my favourite Harry Potter character for advice"* and *"I am comfortable learning from my favourite Harry Potter character"*. The second dimension was *face-to-face desire* – where the participant wishes to communicate with the character; items for this dimension included *"I would be happy to meet my favourite Harry Potter character in person"* and *"I would be comfortable with my favourite Harry Potter character if we met in person"*. The third dimension was *intimacy*– where the participant wishes to learn more about the character; items for this dimension included *"I have an intimate connection with my favourite Harry Potter character"* and *"I see my favourite Harry Potter character as a close friend"*. The final dimension was *familiarity*– the degree of knowledge or familiarity a participant has with the character; items for this dimension included *"I am familiar with the habits of my favourite Harry Potter character"* and *"I have a good understanding of my favourite Harry Potter character"*. Participants reported their agreement with each item on a 7-point likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha of the subscales of PSI were .94 (*guidance,* 8 items), .86 (*face-to-face desire,* 4 items), .83 (*intimacy,* 3 items), and .79 (*familiarity,* 3 items).

Personality.

Personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness were assessed using the NEO Five Factor Inventory (McCrae & Costa, 2004). Each personality subscale had 12 items; the Cronbach's alpha for the personality subscales were .82 (extraversion), .88 (neuroticism), .73 (openness), .80 (agreeableness), .85 (conscientiousness).

Viewing and reading motives.

Two different sets of items were developed based on Rubin's (1983) scale for TV use motives. Participant's responded on a 7-point likert scale to items which assessed whether they had read books (or viewed movies) in the 'Harry Potter' series for relaxation, for entertainment, to pass time, to be social, for escape, for arousal, out of habit, or for companionship. Participants were asked to respond to either the questions focussed on reading books, those focussed on viewing movies, or both, depending on whether they based their responses to the PSI Scale on characters' behaviour in the books, movies, or both. Each of the reading and viewing motive subscales had 3 items; the Cronbach's alpha for the reading motive sub-scales were .76 (relaxation), .66 (entertainment), .75 (to pass time), .63 (social), .66 (escape), .69 (arousal), .67 (habit), .81 (companionship);the Cronbach's alpha for the viewing motive sub-scales were .79 (relaxation), .73 (entertainment), .74 (to pass time), .69 (social), .66 (escape), .70 (arousal), .66 (habit), .77 (companionship).

Results

Descriptive statistics for each of the PSI, personality, and reading and viewing measures, for each participant group, can be seen in Table 1. We then detail correlational analysis for the relationship between how many times participants had read books and viewed movies and the four PSI dimensions. Finally, we report regression analysis to examine the personality, and reading and viewing motives, which predict the four dimensions of PSI.

Table 1.

Mean and standard deviation values (in parenthesis) for each measure for participants who based their responses on characters in books only, characters in movies only, both characters in book and movie, and for all participants.

Measure	Books Only (N = 567)	Movies Only (N = 90)	Both (N = 1211)		Total (N = 1868)	
Guidance	42.97 (9.52)	34.54 (11.75)	42.23 (10.04)		42.23 (10.04)	
Face to Face	24.20 (3.98)	22.47 (4.65)	24.23 (4.28)		24.14 (4.23)	
Intimacy	12.71 (4.79)	9.59 (5.11)	12.85 (4.70)		12.65 (4.80)	
Familiarity	16.74 (3.22)	13.79 (4.69)	16.61 (3.34)		16.52 (3.43)	
Neuroticism	25.01 (6.42)	25.07 (6.33)	25.12 (6.37)		25.08 (6.38)	
Extraversion	29.45 (5.99)	28.22 (5.77)	29.47 (6.18)		29.41 (6.10)	
Openness	31.33 (4.63)	29.44 (4.87)	30.77 (4.58)		30.88 (4.63)	
Agreeableness	32.01 (5.84)	30.37 (6.11)	32.10 (5.80)		31.99 (5.83)	
Conscientiousness	26.07 (4.54)	25.24 (5.06)	26.14 (4.39)		26.08 (4.47)	
			Books	Movies	Books (N = 1778)	Movies (N = 1301)
Relax	18.56 (2.41)	15.59 (3.91)	18.39 (2.74)	17.20 (3.04)	18.44 (2.64)	17.08 (3.13)
Entertainment	19.71 (1.46)	18.47 (1.98)	19.75 (1.53)	19.23 (1.79)	19.74 (1.51)	19.18 (1.81)
Passtime	12.68 (4.44)	13.83 (4.04)	13.20 (4.30)	14.13 (4.26)	13.04 (4.35)	14.11 (4.25)
Social	11.85 (3.71)	14.62 (4.26)	11.71 (3.83)	16.16 (3.77)	11.75 (3.79)	16.05 (3.83)
Habit	11.56 (4.21)	11.22 (3.52)	11.70 (4.33)	11.64 (4.14)	11.65 (4.29)	11.61 (4.10)
Arousal	16.85 (3.00)	14.12 (4.02)	16.48 (3.13)	15.96 (3.11)	16.60 (3.09)	15.84 (3.22)
Companionship	11.05 (5.01)	9.43 (4.30)	11.35 (4.98)	10.64 (4.61)	11.26 (4.99)	10.56 (4.60)
Escape	16.01 (3.75)	14.43 (4.17)	16.08 (3.87)	14.82 (3.78)	16.06 (3.83)	14.79 (3.81)

In order to consider the effect of repeated book reading and movie viewing on PSIs a score for total book reads and total movie views was calculated by summing the number of times each participant had self-reported reading each book and watching each movie. Partial correlations between total number of reads/views and PSI dimensions, controlling for age and

gender, can be seen in Table 2. Each of the four dimensions was positively related to the total

number of book reads and the total number for movie views.

Table 2.

Partial correlation between total number of book reads, total number of movie views and dimensions of PSI.

Total reads/views	Guidance	Face to face	Intimacy	Familiarity
No. of book reads	.15**	.07*	.15**	.17**
No. of movie views	.13**	.13**	.18**	.18**

* p < .01, ** p < .001

For further analysis, data was split into three distinct participant groups: those who

based their responses on a character's behaviour in books only, those who based their

responses on a character's behaviour in movies only, and those who based their responses on

a combination of a character's behaviour in both the books and the movies.

Predicting PSI Dimensions

For each participant group, hierarchical regressions were conducted for each of the

four dimensions of PSI to establish to what extent personality factors, and motives for

viewing and reading, predicted *guidance*, *face-to-face desire*, *familiarity* and *intimacy*. Age,

gender, total number of reads, and total number of views were entered in Block 1. Personality

factors (extraversion, openness, agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness) and

reading and viewing motives (escape, arousal, companionship, entertainment, relax, social,

habit, pass-the-time), where appropriate, were entered stepwise in Block 2.

Responses based on characters in books only (N = 567).

Significant predictors of dimensions of PSI, for participants who based their responses

on the behaviour of characters in books, can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3.

Predictors of dimensions of parasocial interaction for participants who based responses on characters in books only.

Dependent Variable	Block 1			Block 2		
	Predictor	β	ΔR²	Predictor	β	ΔR²
Guidance	Age	-.13***	.07***	Reading for Arousal	.25***	.12***
				Reading for Companionship	.28***	.03***
				Agreeableness	.15***	.02***
				Reading to Passtime	-.18***	.02***
				Extraversion	.12**	.01**
				Neuroticism	.09*	.006*
				Reading out of Habit	.09*	.005*
Face to Face Desire	Total No. of Views	.10*	.02**	Extraversion	.26***	.09***
				Reading for Arousal	.14***	.03***
				Reading to be Social	.11**	.01**
Intimacy	Total No. of Views	.09*	.07***	Reading for Arousal	.30***	.15***
				Reading for Companionship	.40***	.09***
				Reading to Passtime	-.14***	.01***
				Agreeableness	.09*	.007*
Familiarity				Reading for Arousal	.23***	.10***
				Reading for Companionship	.31***	.05***
				Reading to Relax	.14***	.01***
				Reading to Passtime	-.14***	.01**
				Agreeableness	.10*	.009*

Note. Stepwise procedures were used in Block 2 with entry criterion set at $*p \leq .05$, $** p \leq .01$, $p \leq .001$.

Guidance.

Within the books only group, age was a significant negative predictor of *guidance*, demonstrating that older participants were less likely to seek *guidance* from their favourite character. The personality traits of agreeableness, extraversion and neuroticism significantly predicted the level of *guidance*, with those higher in these traits more likely to seek *guidance*. Motives for reading which predicted *guidance* from characters within books were reading for arousal, reading for companionship and reading out of habit.

Face-to-Face Desire.

The dimension of *face-to-face desire* was predicted by the number of times participants had viewed the Harry Potter movies. Despite this group of participants basing their responses on character's behaviour in books only, having viewed the movies a higher number of times made participants more likely to desire face-to-face contact with a character. Extraversion was the only personality trait to significantly predict *face-to-face desire* for this group. Reading for arousal, and reading to be social, also predicted this dimension.

Intimacy.

Total number of movie views was a significant predictor of *intimacy*. The personality trait of agreeableness also predicted *intimacy*; participants high in agreeableness were more likely to seek intimacy with their favourite character from the Harry Potter books. Reading for arousal and for companionship were positive predictors of *intimacy,* whilst those who read to pass-the-time were less likely to seek intimacy from their favourite character.

Familiarity.

The personality trait of agreeableness was a significant predictor of the *familiarity* dimension. An increase in reading for arousal, for companionship, and to relax, significantly

predicted an increase in *familiarity*. An increase in reading to pass-the-time was a significant

predictor of a decrease in *familiarity*.

Within the books only group we have found support for H1, as extraversion was a

predictor of both the dimensions of *guidance* and *face-to-face desire*. Neuroticism was also a

significant predictor of *guidance,* providing support for H2. With respect to motives for

reading, we have found support for H5 as reading for relaxation was a significant predictor of

familiarity.

Responses based on characters in movies only (N = 90).

Significant predictors of PSI dimensions, for participants who based their responses

on characters in movies, can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4.

Predictors of dimensions of parasocial interaction for participants who based responses on characters in movies only.

Dependent Variable	Block 1			Block 2		
	Predictor	β	ΔR²	Predictor	β	ΔR²
Guidance				Viewing to Relax	.34**	.18***
				Viewing for Arousal	.25*	.04*
Face to Face Desire	Total No. of Views	.32*	.12*	Viewing for Entertainment	.35***	.11***
Intimacy				Viewing to Relax	.36**	.36***
				Viewing out of Habit	.33**	.06**
				Viewing to Passtime	-.25*	.03*
				Viewing to Escape	.23*	.02*
Familiarity				Viewing to Relax	.38***	.10***

Viewing for Arousal	.31**	.05***
Neuroticism	-.24**	.01***

Note. Stepwise procedures were used in Block 2 with entry criterion set at *$p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, $p \leq .001$.

Guidance.

In the movies only group viewing to relax and viewing for arousal were the only significant predictors of *guidance*.

Face-to-Face Desire.

The total number of times participants had viewed Harry Potter movies was a significant predictor of *face-to-face desire* for this group. Viewing for entertainment was the only motive which predicted *face-to-face desire*.

Intimacy.

Three motives for viewing Harry Potter movies were significant predictors of *intimacy* for this group, these were: viewing to relax, viewing out of habit, and viewing to escape. Viewing to pass-the-time was a negative predictor of *intimacy,* suggesting that those participants who watched movies to pass-the-time were less likely to seek more intimate knowledge of their favourite character.

Familiarity.

The personality trait of neuroticism was a negative predictor of *familiarity* in the movies only group. Fans who were higher in neuroticism were less likely to have a high level of *familiarity* with their favourite character. Viewing to relax, and for arousal, were motivations which predicted *familiarity* for this group.

Within the movies only group we found support for *H2,* as neuroticism was a significant negative predictor of *familiarity*. Viewing for entertainment was a significant predictor of *face-to-face desire* providing support for *H3*. We also found support for *H5,* as viewing for relaxation was a significant positive predictor of the *guidance*, *intimacy,* and *familiarity* dimensions of PSI.

Responses based on characters' behaviour in both books and movies (N = 1211).

Significant predictors of PSI dimensions, for participants who based their responses on characters' behaviour in both books and movies, can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5.

Predictors of dimensions of parasocial interaction for participants who based responses on characters in books and movies.

Dependent Variable	Block 1			Block 2		
	Predictor	β	ΔR²	Predictor	β	ΔR²
Guidance	Age	-.14***		Reading for Arousal	.15***	.09***
	Total No. of Views	.06*		Reading to Relax	.17***	.04***
	Total No. of Reads	.07*	.08***	Reading for Companionship	.19***	.02***
				Watching to Passtime	-.14***	.01***
				Watching to be Social	.09***	.009***
				Openness	.09***	.008***
				Watching for Entertainment	.08**	.005**
Face to Face Desire	Age	-.06*	.03***	Watching for Arousal	.16***	.07***
				Reading for Entertainment	.10***	.01***
				Reading for Companionship	.10**	.007**
				Extraversion	.08**	.007**
				Watching to Relax	.08*	.005*

				Watching to be Social	.06*	.003*
Intimacy	Age	-.12***		Reading for Arousal	.10*	.10***
	Total No. of Views	.10***		Reading to Passtime	-.20***	.02***
	Total No. of Reads	.06*	.08***	Reading to be Social	.11***	.01***
				Reading to Relax	.09***	.007**
				Watching for Arousal	.13***	.004**
				Reading for Companionship	.18***	.006**
Familiarity	Total No. of Views	.10***		Reading for Arousal	.20***	.10***
	Total No. of Reads	.08**	.07***	Reading for Companionship	.21***	.03***
				Watching for Entertainment	.12***	.02***
				Reading to Relax	.13***	.01***
				Reading to Passtime	-.13***	.01***

Note. As predictors in Block 1 were entered ΔR^2 represented all predictors with this block. Stepwise procedures were used in Block 2 with entry criterion set at *$p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, $p \leq .001$.

Guidance.

A decrease in age significantly predicted an increase in *guidance* sought from a Harry Potter character. Total number of reads and total number of views were both significant positive predictors of *guidance*. Openness was the only personality trait which significantly predicted *guidance,* with those higher in openness more likely to seek guidance. Motives for reading which significantly predicted *guidance* were reading for arousal, for relaxation, and for companionship. Viewing movies to be sociable and for entertainment were positive predictors of *guidance,* whilst watching movies to pass-the-time was a negative predictor.

Face-to-Face Desire.

The desire for *face-to-face* contact with a favourite character in the 'Harry Potter'

series was significantly predicated by age, with an increase in age making desire for *face-to-face* contact less likely. Desire for *face-to-face* contact was significantly predicted by

extraversion, with participants who are higher in extraversion being more likely to desire

face-to-face contact. Reading motives for entertainment and companionship significantly

explained variation in *face-to-face desire,* with those who read for these reasons being more

likely to exhibit this dimension. Motives for viewing movies which significantly predicted

face-to-face desire were arousal, relaxation, and to be sociable.

Intimacy.

A decrease in age significantly predicted an increase in *intimacy* sought with a Harry

Potter character. Total number of reads and total number of views were both positive

predictors of *intimacy*. There were no personality traits which explained *intimacy*. Motives

for reading which significantly predicted *intimacy* were reading for arousal, to be sociable,

for relaxation, and for companionship. Reading to pass-the-time was also a significant

predictor of *intimacy*, with those who read to pass-the-time being less likely to seek intimacy.

Viewing movies for arousal was a positive predictor of *intimacy*.

Familiarity.

Significant variation in *familiarity* was explained by total number of views and total

number of reads, higher levels of watching and reading indicated a greater likelihood of

engaging in *familiarity*. Reading motives which predicted *familiarity* were arousal,

companionship and relaxation; reading to pass-the-time was also a significant negative

predictor of *familiarity*. Watching movies for entertainment was a significant predictor of

familiarity.

With respect to our hypotheses we found that, when considering PSIs with characters from a combination of the books and movies of the 'Harry Potter' series, the personality trait extraversion was a predictor of wishing to engage in *face-to-face* interactions with favourite characters, this provides support for *H1*. We found support for *H5,* as reading for relaxation was a significant predictor of *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity*, whilst viewing for relaxation was a predictor of *face-to-face desire*. Reading for entertainment was a predictor of *face-to-face desire*, whilst viewing for entertainment was a predictor of *guidance* and *familiarity,* supporting *H3*.

Discussion

This study looked at PSI from a novel perspective; focusing on relationships formed with characters that at the time appeared, officially, in only seven books and eight movies but were also accessible through a wide range of multimedia and interactive means of participation. Due to the nature of the 'Harry Potter' phenomenon the study also considers PSI from a multidimensional perspective allowing the suggestion that the profile of traits and motivations which predict PSI may differ dependent on the origin of the persona in question.

Our results provide support for the assertions of Tsay and Bodine that PSI be treated as a multidimensional construct rather than a single measurement. With some exceptions, a different pattern of personality traits, and reading and viewing motives, predicted each of the dimensions. Moreover, this pattern differed dependent on the medium on which participants based their responses. This suggests a PSI cannot be considered a single dimension which is reliant on certain characteristics of those who engage. Differences between the factors which predicted engagement in the four dimensions within Tsay and Bodine's study and in our study only serve to support this possibility further. That is, it is hardly surprising that the factors which predicted PSIs with a favourite TV character or media personality are different

from those which have predicted a PSI with a favourite character within a specific series of fantastical books and movies.

With respect to personality traits, our findings both compliment and contrast those of Tsay and Bodine. We found that neuroticism was a positive predictor of *guidance* in the books only group. Tsay and Bodine also found neuroticism predicted three of four dimensions of PSI, in contrast to their original hypotheses. It is possible that in terms of seeking *guidance*, mediated communication, in this case engagement with Harry Potter books, provides an interpersonal need (Finn & Gorr, 1988) which those high in neuroticism may be less likely to find in face-to-face communication, due to social anxiety. This may be particularly relevant when considering issues of social anxiety in the Harry Potter target audience, who are likely to be in their late childhood and teens.

In line with the suggestion that those higher in neuroticism would be less likely to develop PSIs, due to anxiety and negative perceptions of social interactions (Tsay & Bodine, 2012), we found that neuroticism was a negative predictor of *familiarity* in the movies only group. The difference in results from the books only, as opposed to movies only, groups may be reflective of differences between the *guidance* and *familiarity* dimensions. The dimension of *guidance* relates to engaging with a character for advice and the perception of the character as a role model; whilst the dimension of *familiarity* indicates the level of knowledge or familiarity an individual has with the character. Those high in neuroticism are potentially likely to view a character as a source of advice, as an alternative to seeking advice through interpersonal communication; they may also be less likely to seek knowledge or familiarity with a character, as this would reflect a positive attitude to interpersonal communication uncharacteristic of those high in neuroticism. Both results support *H2* as this hypothesis was

non-directional. We did not find neuroticism to be a predictor of any of the four dimensions for the combined group.

The trait of openness was a predictor of *guidance* for the combined group. The relationship of openness to PSI was unclear in previous literature. Tsay and Bodine found no relationship between openness and the four dimensions they identified. Despite open individuals being more likely to engage in novel interactions these authors speculated that a greater level of interactivity may be required. Kraaykamp and van eijck (2005) found that open individuals prefer complex and stimulating genres when reading, prefer cultural and informative television, and enjoy a range of outdoor cultural pursuits (historical and art museums, pop and classical concerts). These traits are likely to be reflective of the current participant pool. In particular the 'Harry Potter' series could be considered stimulating reading, and readers can build upon their reading experience by accessing websites. Fans may also participate in physical cultural activities directly related to the series. These factors may contribute to why open individuals seek guidance from their favourite character in the 'Harry Potter' series.

In the books only group, agreeableness was found to predict three of the four PSI dimensions: *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity*. Interaction with others is a key aspect of agreeableness. Previous research has noted that individuals high in agreeableness are possibly less likely to engage in mediated relationships as they prefer interpersonal communication (Finn, 1997; Tsay & Bodine, 2012). Finn (1997) found that agreeable individuals were more likely to take part in interpersonal communication, but less likely to engage in television viewing; they also did not read for pleasure. In contrast, more recent research has shown that friendly individuals (an alternative label for agreeable) enjoy watching popular television (Kraaykamp, 2001), and soap operas, and reading romantic fiction (Kraaykamp & van Eijck,

2005). It is suggested that friendly individuals engage only with non-challenging, main stream media (Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2005). Tsay and Bodine did not find support for their hypotheses that agreeableness would be a negative predictor of PSI. Our results suggest agreeable individuals have developed PSIs with characters from the Harry Potter series. It is likely that, for this participant group, the Harry Potter books fall into the category of non-challenging; the series is aimed at children or teenagers, whilst our participants are all over eighteen. Kraaykanp (2001) also suggests a link between agreeableness and interpersonal empathy, and this may be reflected in the dimensions of *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity*.

Extraversion was found to predict *face-to-face desire* in both the books only group and the combined group. Extraversion was also a predictor of *guidance* for those who based responses on books only. These findings provide support for *H1* and reflect Tsay and Bodine's hypothesis that extraversion would be associated with PSI, as those high in extraversion enjoy mediated relationships on the same level as face-to-face relationships. Differences between our results, and those of Tsay and Bodine, may stem from the more specific nature of our participant group, and the possibilities to engage more sociably with the media. This is reflected in the range of dimensions which were predicted by reading or viewing to be sociable. The finding for extraversion also contrasts with previous research which suggests that fans with an introverted personality type are more likely to engage in fan subculture (Stever 1991; 1995). This difference may be related to the media under examination, and the timing of the research; Stever's research was completed at a time when some of the media under examination (e.g. Star Trek) was considered a fan subculture or had cult status. By contrast Harry Potter, at the time this study was completed, would be culturally considered mainstream.

The presence of an association of extraversion with the *face-to-face desire* dimension, also suggests that rather than enjoying a parasocial interaction on the same level as a face-to-face one, those high in extraversion would prefer to meet characters where possible. This is interesting when considering the current research has assessed PSIs with fictional characters alone, whilst previous studies allow for participants to consider media personalities, news readers, and other 'real' celebrities. We cannot ignore the possibility that participants may confuse the actors who play characters in the 'Harry Potter' series of movies with the characters themselves. Participants high in extraversion may simply wish to seek a face-to-face interaction with an actor. Yet, for those participants who based their responses to questions on reading of books this cannot be the case.

Giles (2002) highlighted the difference between types of parasocial interactions. This review indicated that those relationships formed with inauthentic characters, in particular fictional characters, are 'second-order'. Whilst those relationships formed with personalities who directly address their audience are 'first-order'. With respect to our data set, it is not possible for the participant to come into contact with the character with which they have formed a bond as they could a news reader. Although, it may be possible to come into contact with the actor or actress who plays the character and so the interaction in question is 'second-order'. It may be expected that PSIs would be strongest where they fall into the category of 'first-order' (Giles, 2002). However, evidence suggests that PSIs are stronger for fictional programming (Nabi, Stitt, Halford & Finnerty, 2006). Our results support this suggestion. The strength of a PSI with fictional characters is particularly relevant to the current study, as those participants who based their responses to PSI questions on characters from their reading alone could not base their responses to the *face-to-face desire* questions on their wish to meet an actor or actress. Although, notably, total number of views for this group was a predictor of the f*ace-to-face desire* dimension. If these participants responded based on reading alone, the

relationship would be considered 'third-order' since there would be no actor or actress to personify the character. In a review, De Backer (2012) suggests that 'third-order' PSIs may be of a lower intensity than first or second order interactions. De Backer's suggestions are based on the idea that the subject of 'third-order' interactions is unrealistic, for example a cartoon character. Characters within the 'Harry Potter' series of novels are unrealistic, in that they are able to perform magic and inhabit a fantastical world which runs parallel to reality. However, the characters are also undeniably human and experience many of the same issues experienced by soap opera characters; for example bullying, discrimination, jealousy and romance. When interactions are 'second-order' although it is unlikely that participants will come into contact with these personalities it is at least possible; whereas contact with characters from the Harry Potter novels is not. Within our data set the dimension of *face-to-face desire* was predicted by fewer reading motives than the other dimensions. Participants with certain motives for reading may develop strong PSIs with their favourite characters in the dimensions of *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity* but they may recognise that a face-to-face meeting is impossible and so their motives for reading do not reflect this aspect of PSI. Overall these differences provide support for the suggestion that PSI should be considered a multidimensional construct. The pattern of motives which led to *face-to-face desire* is different to those which led to the remaining three constructs.

We put forward three hypotheses relating to motives for engaging with the Harry Potter series. Of these, the greatest support was found for *H5*. Reading for relaxation predicted *familiarity* for the books only group, and *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity* for the combined group. Viewing to relax predicted *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity* for the movies only group, and *face-to-face desire* for the combined group. There was also some support for *H3*. Reading for entertainment was associated with *face-to-face desire* in the combined group; and viewing for entertainment with *face-to-face desire* for the movies only

group. In the combined group, viewing for entertainment was associated with *guidance* and *familiarity*. These findings suggest that those engaging in PSIs with characters in this series find it a relaxing and enjoyable experience, and engage for positive, active, reasons. We found limited support for *H4,* as *intimacy* was the only dimension predicted by viewing to escape within the movies only group.

Viewing Harry Potter movies to be sociable was a significant predictor of *face-to-face desire*, as well as *guidance,* for participants in the combined group; reading to be sociable was a predictor of this dimension in the books only group. Preference for social, rather than solitary, activities has been suggested for those who are high in extraversion, and those who are high in agreeableness (Finn, 1997; Kraaykamp, 2001; Kraaykamp & van Eijck, 2005). Partial correlations, completed post hoc, indicate that reading for social ($pr = .13$, $p < .001$) and viewing for social ($pr = .17$, $p < .001$) are both positively correlated with extraversion, but not agreeableness ($pr = .02$, $p = .43$; $pr = .04$, $p = .15$ respectively), in the combined group. In the books only group, reading to be social positively correlated with extraversion ($pr = .10$, $p = .01$) but not agreeableness ($pr = .01$, $p = .75$). Neither extraversion ($pr = .19$, $p = .07$) nor agreeableness ($pr = .08$, $p = .43$) correlated with viewing to be sociable in the movies only group. In the case of Harry Potter fans, *face-to-face desire* within a PSI is possibly linked to more social aspects reflective of individuals high in extraversion. Those who score highly on *face-to-face desire* may be more likely to engage in the pursuit of further contact with characters, for example, by spending time on fan websites or related social networking pages. They may also enjoy the 'Harry Potter' series more sociably; for example, watching movies in groups, discussing the characters with friends, or using social media to connect to other fans.

All four PSI dimensions were significantly predicted by reading for companionship in the combined group; *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity* were predicted by this motive in the books only group. Although we did not chose to measure aspects such as loneliness, the recurrence of reading for companionship, for most dimensions, suggests that participants who are likely to engage in PSIs do so to alleviate loneliness in their lives (Schiappa, Allen & Gregg, 2007; Baek, Bae, Jang, 2013). Viewing for companionship did not predict any dimensions, in any of the groups, and this contrast likely reflects the fact that viewing of movies in the 'Harry Potter' series may be a more sociable activity. Previous research has failed to find support for a relationship between loneliness and PSI (Derrick et al., 2008; Giles, 2002; Rubin, Perse & Powell, 1985). Although it has been demonstrated, using Harry Potter books, that reading a narrative detailing a specific group, in this case wizards, leads to an implicit and explicit assimilation with the group in question (Gabriel & Young, 2011). Gabriel and Young suggest that such assimilation is reflective of the desire to belong to groups. This suggestion aligns with our results in that engagement in PSI with characters from Harry Potter can be predicted by companionship and by the motivation to be sociable.

In the books only group, reading to pass-the-time was a negative predictor of *guidance*, *intimacy* and *familiarity*; whilst in the combined group reading to pass-the-time negatively predicted *intimacy* and *familiarity*, and viewing to pass-the-time was a negative predictor of *guidance*. Viewing to pass-the-time was a negative predictor of *intimacy* for those who based responses on movies only. Participants were not likely to engage in these dimensions of a PSI with their favourite character if they read books or watched movies merely to pass-the-time. This result indicates that readers and viewers need to be engaged with the material before they can develop a PSI. Research has shown that there is often a positive relationship between engagement in a parasocial interaction (where the participants feels they are experiencing a reciprocal encounter with the target during a viewing episode)

and development of a PSI (Hu, 2016). This would suggest that engaging with the book or movie would lead to greater experience of PSI, as opposed to completing the activity to pass-the-time. With respect to the Harry Potter series, passive strategies for engagement do not appear to satisfy any uses or gratifications.

Reading for arousal, and viewing for arousal, are consistent predictors of several dimensions of PSI. This finding likely reflects previous suggestions that PSIs are formed when engaging with media for pleasure (Tsay & Bodine, 2012). It is a limitation of this study that further aspects of affective arousal cannot be examined to assess this relationship with PSI. Notably, many of the other motives which predicted dimensions are positive, active, strategies for using media, and so fans likely engage in reading or viewing for a positive sense of arousal, pleasure, and excitement. This is particularly pertinent to the series under consideration as, although non-challenging, storylines are exciting, and include action and adventure. It may be interesting to see if reading or viewing for arousal were related to PSI in a more sedate genre.

Our discussion in relation to the uses and gratifications approach is limited as we have not assessed interpersonal need directly. Our assessment of motives suggests that fans of the Harry Potter series are more likely to engage in PSIs when they are seeking companionship, or to be social, and this would suggest the fulfilment of a need for interpersonal interaction. Further research could address the question of whether motives for engaging with the series correlate with the interpersonal needs of fans.

One additional aspect which has not been addressed in the current study is that of parasocial breakup (PSB). PSB is the experience of negative emotional responses as a consequence of a PSI coming to an end (Cohen, 2003; Eyal & Cohan, 2006). Research investigating reactions to the end of the sitcom "Friends" (Eyal & Cohen, 2006), and

disruption to programming schedules due to a writer's strike (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011), found that higher levels of PSI led to audience members experiencing higher levels of PSB when a favourite character was no longer present in media. Levels of PSB could also be predicted by loneliness (Eyal & Cohen, 2006), and viewing programs for companionship (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011). The initial books and movies featuring the character 'Harry Potter' have been in the public domain since 2011. As discussed there are a range of other opportunities to engage with these characters and the fictional world in which they reside. Fans are also free to re-read or re-view the books and movies as often as they like. More recently a theatrical production has opened which revisits some of the characters within the original Harry Potter series; an accompanying book of scripts is also available allowing readers to engage with the story. The return of these characters in a new, official form, may allow an opportunity to assess both PSB experienced after the release of the final initial books and movies, and any PSI experienced during reading of the newer instalment. Future research may also assess if PSB could be considered a multidimensional construct in a similar manner to PSI. Different aspects of PSB (loneliness or boredom) are likely associated with different motives for engaging in PSI (to be sociable or to pass-the-time), and different dimensions of PSI (*face-to-face desire* or, negatively with *guidance*)

Conclusion

We have built on the literature on PSIs by assessing engagement in this type of relationship with characters within a specific series of books and movies. We have found that PSIs with characters from the Harry Potter series may relate to the non-challenging, mainstream (as opposed to subculture), nature of the series. Differences between the mediums which fans use to engage with the series were also found. Those with interactions based on books potentially demonstrate social anxiety as a reason for engaging in PSI

through neuroticism, and reading for companionship. Whilst those with interactions based on movies had more social motives for engaging. Our results also provide support for Tsay and Bodine's suggestion that parasocial interaction be treated as a multidimensional construct, as patterns of personality and motivation factors which predict the four dimensions differ. The difference between previous research and the current results suggest that global predictors of PSI are unlikely to be found, rather, factors such as the medium used to engage with personalities and characters, or the persona themselves, shape the reasons people engage in the dimensions of PSI. Treating PSI as multidimensional will allow a greater depth of research into such predictors; as will consideration that the profile of factors that can predict the dimensions of PSI will differ dependent on the personae in question.

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