Using the *Harry Potter* Series in the Multicultural English Classroom as a Tool to Bring Awareness to Unconscious Biases

Rukaia Abou-Gabal
Magister Essay
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Supervisor: Gul Han

Abstract

The *Harry Potter* series, although primarily written for young adults has managed to be widely popular amongst readers of different ages. The series has been able to entice both young and adult readers all over the world as it provides readers with ample opportunities for self-recognition and thus even self-reflection. Other than providing readers with opportunities for self-recognition the series also provides multiple examples of different important real-world issues such as mental health, othering, discrimination, and the stereotype threat.

In the *Harry Potter* series, readers are introduced to a whole new world filled with magic, witches, wizards, and other magical beings. The magical world is, however, still very similar to our world; it follows the same timeline as the real world, showcases different teenage problems as well as similar social structures and issues.

In today's society immigrants and students from different nationalities, cultures and backgrounds are very common, leading to othering, stereotyping and prejudices being real issues that need to be addressed in today's multicultural classes. Students are in need of support and encouragement to better understand and handle these issues in their everyday life.

Drawing on these ideas this essay will, by using a thematic analysis of the *Harry Potter* series, focus on the depth of the prejudices presented in the series by examining the underlying structural understanding of othering and racialization which readers are not always aware of being prejudiced against and how these prejudices are presented in the series. The aim is to show how the issues of unconscious biases and othering in the *Harry Potter* series are presented through the themes and characterization and how they can be used in eliciting empathy by alerting students to the fact that othering and discrimination are often based on unconscious biases found within the society.

Keywords: Education, Pedagogy, Empathy, Harry Potter, Prejudice, Othering, Unconscious Biases, Discrimination

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Understanding is the first step to acceptance.
Without acceptance, there would be no recovery
- Albus Dumbledore

Introduction

Sweden is the home of around two million non-native Swedish citizens and is thus a multicultural country with a multicultural society. Sweden values people's integrity and views everyone as equals regardless of race, gender, belief, culture, or sexual orientation. Sweden has an inclusive approach towards refugees, immigrants as well as those who come from other ethnic or cultural backgrounds and is proud to have an integration policy that stands for equality (Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009). Sweden takes education seriously and the Swedish government has thus established introduction programs such as IM (Introduction programs) and SFI (Swedish for Immigrants). These classes are designed and adapted after each student's individual knowledge and need with the common goal to help direct and introduce newly arrived immigrants to the Swedish curriculum and school environment. Moreover, to provide them with the opportunity to focus on learning Swedish while also learning about the different customs found in Swedish society (Skolverket 2016, 8-11). The recent years have witnessed an increased migration to Europe and thus also to Sweden. Many of those immigrants are young people, a situation that led to a noticeable change in the schools making one-fifth of the student body come from a foreign background. The Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school states that education should create an opportunity for teaching fundamental democratic values and human rights (Skolverket 2013, 4). The curriculum further emphasizes the importance of promoting understanding of others as well as fostering the ability to empathize. The curriculum states that "intolerance must be confronted with knowledge, open discussion and active measures" (Skolverket 2013, 9). Moreover, the syllabus decrees that the English subject taught in the upper secondary classes should cover current and meaningful issues as well as issues that students can relate to and identify with. This shows the importance of raising conversations about inclusion, tolerance and creating a safe and accepting classroom environment in which all students feel equal and welcome, especially in multicultural classes. The curriculum for the upper secondary

education also states that the education should represent and impart "The inviolability of human life, individual freedom and integrity, the equal value of all people, equality between women and men, and solidarity between people" (Skolverket 2013, 4). This can be taught using the literature that conveys the desired values since readers unconsciously absorb the values embedded within different texts.

This study will focus on how the *Harry Potter* series can be used as a tool in the multicultural classroom and introduction classes to discuss othering, discrimination and unconscious biases as well as eliciting empathy by alerting students to the fact that othering and discrimination are often based on unconscious biases found within the society. *Harry Potter*, although primarily written for young adults has managed to be widely popular amongst readers of different ages. The series has been able to entice both young and adult readers all over the world as it provides the reader with ample opportunities for self-recognition and thus even self-reflection. Other than providing the reader with opportunities for self-recognition the series also provides multiple examples of different important real-world issues such as mental health, othering, racism and the stereotype threat.

In *Harry Potter*, the reader is introduced to a whole new world filled with magic, witches, wizards and other magical beings. The magical world is, however, still very similar to our own world; it follows the same timeline as the real world, showcases different teenage problems as well as similar social structures and issues. One of the series' focal points is the mutual resentment found between the Muggles and the wizarding community based on the existing intolerance and racial discrimination that each race holds towards the other. The *Harry Potter* series' main theme is therefore not stereotyping and prejudices; they are, however, amongst the key topics that call for analysis and critical reflection, especially in today's society. In today's society immigrants and students from different nationalities, cultures, and backgrounds make up a part of the population, leading to othering, stereotyping and prejudices being real issues that need to be addressed in today's multicultural classes. Students require support and encouragement to better understand and handle these issues in their everyday life.

Many scholars, such as Jackie Horne and Charles Stangor, have chosen to focus on issues of racism and anti-racism presented in the books while others, such as Meredith Cherland and Elizabeth Heilman, have approached the idea of gender stereotyping. Many arguments have also been made in regard to explaining the themes

of discrimination and othering presented throughout the seven novels in the *Harry Potter* series. Although these themes have been covered by a wide variety of previous research, the presentations of discrimination and othering in these novels are, however, as this essay aims to show, much more complicated and deeper than it has so far been argued. This essay will thus focus on examining the depth of the prejudices presented in the series by exploring the underlying structural understanding of othering and racialization which the readers do not always perceive being prejudice against and how these prejudices are presented in the series. The aim is to show how the issues of unconscious biases and othering in the *Harry Potter* series are presented through themes and characterization and how they can be used in teaching empathy by alerting students that othering and discrimination are often based on unconscious biases found within the society.

This essay is based on a thematic analysis of the *Harry Potter* series, which is a method of identifying and analyzing certain patterns within a given textual data (Braun and Clarke 2006, 6). This method has been chosen since it allows for a specific analysis of the themes which the essay aims to focus on. Themes are understood to be something that potentially unifies the different texts since they can capture "something important about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun and Clarke 2006, 10). Themes are thus not precisely based on what the story is about, but instead about what interests the reader, and which patterns the reader can find linked to the interests of his research. This essay will use five novels of the *Harry Potter* series as the data of the thematic analysis, with a focus on themes of discrimination and othering linked to the curriculum and syllabus. The six *Harry Potter* novels are; *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone* (TPS), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (TCOS), *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (TGOF), *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (TOOTP), *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* (THBP) and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (DH).

Theories

This essay aims to bring forth and analyze the prejudices and othering presented in the series with the goal of making students more aware of the existing unconscious biases and thus enable to be more mindful of how they act and more aware of the unconscious biases they may be harboring. Ethnocentrism, racialization, stereotyping and

unconscious biases are thus important terms for this essay. This section presents these terms and theories in preparation for the analysis of the *Harry Potter* series as well as the pedagogical section that will follow.

Ethnocentrism, Stereotypes and Racialization:

Ethnocentrism is present in almost all cultures one way or another, creating uncertainty and anxiety for people in intercultural encounters. Ethnocentrism is a term used in both psychology and social science and refers to the process of judging other cultures based on the belief that one's own culture, language, values, norms and customs are superior to others. People thus believe that their own culture and its different parts is the norm, the natural and the correct way to be and that anything else is the different, the Other or the unnatural (Zolfagharian et al 2014). Assessing others and other cultures is thus based on the comparison with their own culture. Ethnocentrism thus talks about an "in-group" and an "out-group"; the in-group being the superior and the group which others should aspire to be, whereas the out-group is the different and subjugated group. The in-group tend to harbor negative attitudes towards the out-group, thus creating prejudices against other cultures, groups and individuals (Zolfagharian et al 2014). Ethnocentrism is in a way very similar to stereotyping; which refers to generalizations made about certain people based on them belonging to a specific group. Stereotypes presume that certain qualities and behavioral traits are shared between each member of the same group. There are positive, negative and neutral stereotypes. Due to the stereotype simply being a generalization made about something or someone, a stereotype does not always have to be an evaluative connotation and can instead simply be an observation about a generalized trait. There must be either a negative or positive reflective categorization for the stereotype to be an evaluative connotation. According to Hogg and Abrams, the stereotypes fulfil three important functions; social causality, social justification and social differentiation (Hogg and Abrams 1998, 68). The social causality uses stereotypes to exemplify and explain large-scale social events so members of the society can better understand them. The social justification uses stereotypes to justify certain actions that have been planned and committed against certain other groups. The social differentiation refers to the tendency to look at others primarily based on one's own perspective and beliefs fully believing those to be the correct way of viewing the world, also known as Ethnocentrism (Hogg and Abrams

1998, 67). The word "stereotypes" is, however, hugely associated with negativity since it is mostly used to generate negative connotations and implications about a certain individual or group. Stereotypes are usually socially agreed upon and thus exist as a cognitive and social structure shared amongst the majority of the society (Hogg and Abrams 1998, 57). It might thus be argued for the elimination of stereotypes; getting rid of stereotypes is, however, impossible and can even be harmful seeing as they fulfil three important functions in our society. Stereotypes should therefore instead be modified so they no longer represent derogatory and discriminatory behavior and instead only refer to their original and earlier mentioned functions in society (Hogg and Abrams 1998, 74). Stereotypes have proven to affect one's self-esteem and create a feeling of inferiority which in turn can affect students' anxiety levels leading to lower academic performance and achievement. This leads to the necessity of researching how stereotyping, discrimination and racialization may affect students. Racialization is a heavily loaded term with multiple similar meanings, but in its basic form racialization refers to the act of ascribing a person, group or something with certain racial or ethnic identities or characteristics that it does not identify itself with (Molina 2005, 96-99). Racialization often takes place due to a dominating group wanting to stay in power, yet the racialized group often comes to gradually accept, embrace and identify themselves with the ascribed identities becoming a self-ascribed ethnicity. This essay will focus on Flaguni Sheth's approach in explaining racialization as it is better suited for the analysis which will take place later on in the essay. According to Sheth; racialization is an act of dehumanization as it sees the targeted individual, group or population fundamentally unworthy of the law's protection and "this repeated lack of protection has the effect of dehumanizing the same group" rendering "the population in question *inhuman*" (Sheth 2009, 53). The dehumanization might, in turn, lead to the overlooking of the targeted group's lives, especially if they are socially excluded or seen as unworthy of legal protection.

Prejudice and Unconscious Biases:

Prejudice, according to the Cambridge Dictionary is defined as "an unfair and unreasonable opinion or feeling, especially when formed without enough thought or knowledge"[1]. Prejudice thus represents a person's unjustified and unreasonable like or

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[1] Cambridge Dictionary; https://dictionary.cambridge.org/

dislike of a certain thing, individual or group. Prejudice is usually based on a preconceived opinion, which is not necessarily based on reason or actual experience, about someone for belonging to a certain group or for having certain beliefs. There are those who, according to Stangor, believe that prejudice is evolutionary (Stangor 2009, 8-9). Those people base their beliefs on prejudice only targeting the unable and undeveloped, stigmatizing the unable and undeveloped precisely for being unable to contribute in social exchange or for posing a threat to the majority and its values (Stangor 2009, 9). People are not always consciously aware of them holding prejudice against others and might thus also be unaware of their own wrongdoings. The same dictionary defines biases as "the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing unfairly way, because of allowing personal opinions to influence your judgment"[2]. Biases are thus a prejudice unfairly working in favor of or against a thing, an individual or a group in contrast to another. Prejudice and biases are thus both based on the tolerance of certain individuals and the intolerance of others. Intolerance is defined as the unwillingness and opposition to let others believe or act in a way that differs or opposes you or your own beliefs. Intolerance is thus an individual's unwillingness to accept the differences which distinguish others from him and his beliefs. Prejudices and biases can both be conscious and explicit as well as unconscious and implicit.

The implicit and unconscious biases can be explained by the existing implicit attitudes which humans hold and yet are below their consciousness and awareness (Zarate 2009, 391). To be able to reduce the unconscious biases and the existing prejudices one must find a way to bring them to light, make people more aware of their existence and thus be able to achieve drastic social change. Furthermore, Hogg and Abrams propose education amongst the possible ways of dealing with prejudice (Hogg and Abrams 1998, 75). Unconscious biases are often unconscious prejudices based on existing social stereotypes about certain people and certain groups. According to Ross, our unconscious thoughts often play a bigger role in our decision making than we actually can imagine (Ross 2014, 11-13). Our unconscious minds build rules about the world and society and how they work based on the repeated information, stories, patterns and associations which we have acquired either by experiences or by hearing them from others. Based on the rules, which it has created, our unconscious mind then

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[2] Cambridge Dictionary; https://dictionary.cambridge.org/

makes hundreds and thousands of fleeting assumptions and predictions per day. Biases are thus very natural but can also often be against and conflict with our will and our conscious values and beliefs. Since the unconscious biases are directly and hugely affected by the narratives which we pick up through what we experience and hear, they are often tainted by the stereotypes which have infected our society. Being repeatedly exposed to certain stereotypes and not represented with enough counterarguments triggers our unconscious minds into storing the stereotypes for future referencing and use. They are then used by our unconscious minds without any regard for accuracy or truthfulness.

Harry Potter as a tool in teaching the upper secondary classes

The best way to teach and educate, according to J. K. Rowling, is to allow the students to actually put the theory into practice while having fun learning (Nel 2001, 30). J. K. Rowling means that students can find joy in learning "through games with words, numbers and ideas" (Nel 2001, 31). Books always have an impact on their readers, the readers are however not always aware of how the books shape them and their beliefs. Authors have always implemented their adept skills to express certain beliefs and ideologies which they hope to teach each reader, their books will thus generate and convey these certain ideas even if the reader might not always be conscious of them at first. J. K. Rowling is no exception; her books have always portrayed opinions, ideals, beliefs as well as other ideas she might have wanted to bring awareness to. There are therefore many benefits to reading the *Harry Potter* series in the older school years. Students can be made aware of how society and hierarchies work by reading and discussing books. Students have also shown to be more aware of their own actions in specific aspects after reading books that challenge those specific aspects. Students can thus be made aware of their own wrongdoings, prejudices, stereotyping and acts of othering through the reading and discussion of a book that challenges those ideas (Wing 1997, 501).

Additionally, purposefully reading fantasy to dismantle the process of othering helps bring more awareness to the reader and makes them more conscious of commonplace things, structures and ideologies found in their everyday life (Egoff 2005, 8-10). The fantasy and fiction genre has an ability to transport its reader into another world, different from the real one yet demonstrating certain truths (Egoff 2005,

9). However, being a fantasy series does not automatically mean that the series aims to function as an escape from reality. Fiction and fantasy literature can be used to vividly portray, explain and amplify real issues making the reader more aware of them (Heilman 2009, 20). These themes of prejudice and discrimination presented in the *Harry Potter* series can, depending on the class, be a little hard for students to talk about and openly discuss, especially for those who have experienced such mistreatment. It is also important to acknowledge that the books get darker and deeper the more the series progresses and that the issues at hand also change accordingly due to the aging of the characters. Being brought up through a book they enjoy reading would thus make it easier for the students to talk about such issues.

Using fantasy in the classroom is thus particularly useful since it allows the reader to distantiate her/himself from reality while still mirroring certain structures, ideologies and events taking place in the said reality (Alkestrand 2016, 12-13). Reading fantasy thus helps the reader be transported to a new place and a new state of mind making the familiar seem distant and opening opportunities for the distant and foreign to become closer. This idea of defamiliarization opens the readers' eyes to new perspectives and makes the reshaping of ethical frameworks possible (Alkestrand 2016, 88-89). Defamiliarization refers to creating and presenting the reader with common and familiar things in an unfamiliar and new way or environment. In the *Harry Potter* series, defamiliarization thus means taking the known and familiar, such as school subjects, and defamiliarizing it through magic and a new world (Alkestrand 2016, 256-257). Defamiliarization is used to enhance the readers' perception of the known and familiar seeing as it often times can be overlooked due to its familiarity.

There are many reasons behind choosing to use the *Harry Potter* series specifically, as a tool in the upper secondary classes. The series' language will not pose a challenge for more advanced students and they will thus be able to better focus on the content and discussions at hand. Being written in a relatively "simple" and "basic" language also allows for students with a less proficient English to be able to participate in the reading and discussion without having to worry about not fully understanding the language.

However, taking a deeper look into the grammar and linguistics used in writing the series shows that the series is not as easy as one might originally believe. J. K. Rowling knowingly chooses to include many anagrams in her series, most of which can be traced back to Greek mythology and can be deciphered and understood using Latin.

The spells, the Hogwarts houses as well as the teachers' names are all examples of how well she thought everything through. The teachers' names are all mostly based on either their academic specialties, their characteristics, their personalities or other things that describe their character. Madam Poppy Pomfrey works as a healer at Hogwarts,- in other words, she is the school nurse, her first name Poppy is associated with the flower which in its dried form was used to relieve pain and soothe the sick (Nel 2001, 32). Lord Voldemort is another great example since his given name is an anagram "Tom Marvolo Riddle" which once the letters are rearranged turns into "I am Voldemort". There is nothing Voldemort fears more than death, his name is thus very fitting since in French "vol de mort" translates into "flight of death" (Nel 2001, 50).

One might argue that the *Harry Potter* series is viewed as a simplistic children's literature unfitted for upper secondary students or for the serious and deep reading which the students will have to perform. *Harry Potter* does, however, offer its readers ample materials and topics to think about and contemplate.

Written in a relatively accessible language structure the series may not present any linguistic challenge to its more advanced readers. This, however, leaves more room for the reader to delve deeper into the series' more hidden meanings, reading between the lines and interpreting without having a challenging language as an obstacle. *Harry Potter* instead forms a great and useful tool for the English teaching taking place in secondary school when it comes to deeper reading and interpretation.

It can however still be argued that this is not enough, and that *Harry Potter* is a fantasy series believed to be targeted towards a younger audience. Although *Harry Potter* is technically classified as a children's book, the author J. K. Rowling has explained that her series was directed to both youngsters and adults. J. K. Rowling states that she wrote something she knew she would like to read now as an adult but that it also was something, she knew that she would have liked to read at the age of ten (Nel 2001, 51). She continuous saying that she did consciously include obvious jokes aimed for children such as the trollsnot and exploding cauldrons, but that she also included a deeper meaning and more adult-themed issues that aim to entertain its adult readers. This means that the *Harry Potter* series is fully equipped to be used in teaching the upper secondary classes.

Analyses

Many scholars argue that the oppression found in *Harry Potter* is solely based on racism (Eccleshare 2002, 75). I would have agreed with the oppression being solely based on race had the discrimination been limited to the treatment of muggles and muggleborns (Rowling TGOF 2000, 102). There are, however, ample examples in the series providing proof that the prejudice, oppression and discrimination found in the series are based on larger patterns of othering, discrimination and racialization more so than it solely being a racial issue. The prejudice found in the series can mainly be traced back to Voldemort and his followers and how they treat other beings, whether they are muggles or other magical creatures. However, some examples also prove that the wizarding-kin generally tend to discriminate and hold prejudices. For example, the Ministry of Magic only consists of wizards despite being the government of all magical beings and beasts. Moreover, wizards have often placed themselves far above other magical beings and beasts in the social hierarchy. Furthermore, "Goblins have got good reason to dislike wizards… they've been treated brutally in the past" they have also been rejected and refused their right to attend the wizarding council (Rowling DH 2007, 409).

The series also has a sharper focus on the prejudice against muggles, muggle-borns and non-pureblooded witches and wizards mostly presented through Voldemort's aspiration after creating his ideal world through executing a blood purification. The series does, however, still portray prejudice against different magical creatures and other wizards and witches regardless of their blood status.

Even though many magical creatures get neglected and mistreated, it is mostly the stronger and more powerful magical beings that get subjugated and are forced to work for the wizards, mostly due to the differences found between them and the wizards whether it be physical differences or differences in capabilities and magical abilities. Many magical beings are intelligent and capable and thus considered competent enough to participate in the ministry of magic, they are nevertheless denied this right solely based on the existing stigmas and stereotypes created and upheld in the magical world.

Bethany Barratt divides the wizards and witches into different groups, each group representing a certain ideology when it comes to the magical beings and how they should be treated (Barratt 2012, 72). The first group believing that all magical beings should be treated equally and that they, despite being a separate entity, should

have equal opportunities and equal rights. The second group, which according to Barratt is made up of the majority of the wizards and witches, does not consider the other magical beings as remotely human and instead views them as lesser creatures (Barratt 2012, 78). Furthermore, the "Wizarding history often skates over what the wizards have done to other magical races (...)" (Rowling DH 2007, 409). This means that wizarding students are never taught about how the wizards mistreat the other magical beings. They thus grow up unaware of the mistreatment, intolerance and discrimination which the other magical beings are being subjected to. Furthermore, the wizarding kids are not only unaware of the mistreatment but are also constantly exposed to stories that stereotype the other magical beings and ascribe certain negative traits and behaviors to each magical creature. This directs the growing wizards and witches to gain a certain perception and understanding regarding the magical creatures around them. This, in turn, leads to the wizarding kids growing up with unconscious biases towards the other magical beings, believing that a wizard is the only one allowed to carry a wand and that house-elf enslavement is normal. The stereotypes and unconscious biases found in our own world work similarly, since children are subjected to social norms from a young age, picking up social hierarchies as well as what is socially acceptable and socially unacceptable and then adhering to them throughout their lives. The children simultaneously also unconsciously pick up all the stereotypes and prejudices found in society. Young readers can be alerted to how stereotypes and biases are created through reading fantasy stories, they are then able to make connections to their own world and in turn take active steps in trying to avoid falling into acting upon them.

Taking a deeper look into how the wizards of the magical world of *Harry Potter* treat their fellow wizards and magical creatures makes it very clear that many creatures get neglected, set aside and looked down upon, which is discussed in more detail in later sections. J. K. Rowling's magical world is the home of many magical creatures; there are goblins, house-elves, centaurs, werewolves and giants to name but a few. There has always been an insalubrious hierarchy in the wizarding world. According to Maza, the magical identity was never a self-constituted absolute, but instead the magical identity was derived and maintained through the "difference and opposition vis-à-vis the Other," and the magical identity's stability therefore fundamentally depended on the constant exclusion of the Other (Maza 2012, 430). The wizards and witches are, in other words, in need of subjugating and oppressing other magical creatures to stay in power.

The wizards have thus always, in the fictional world of the series, portrayed certain prejudices against the other beings, and they have also always thought themselves to be the better magical creation. Their ethnocentric belief was also portrayed for everyone in the magical community to see in the Ministry of Magic. Halfway down the great hall of the Ministry of Magic was a fountain; the fountain of Magical Brethren. The Fountain of Magical Brethren depicted a group of golden statues, "Tallest of them all was a noble-looking wizard with his wand pointing straight up in the air. Grouped around him was a beautiful witch, a centaur, a goblin and a house-elf. The last three were all looking adoringly up at the witch and wizard" (Rowling TOOTP 2003, 144). This fountain symbolizes the existing stereotypes found in the magical world and the issues possibly underlining said stereotypes. The message which the fountain sends is very clear; wizards and witches are presented as superior and noble and are thus the focal point. The other creatures are presented as lower beings holding nothing but awe and adoration towards witches and wizards. This is believed to have been degrading to the other non-wizarding magical beings that, for some reason or other, were present in the Ministry. This is the case especially for the goblins and centaurs since they pride themselves on believing that they are the better species and that they are superior to the wizards. This shows that most cultures in the series harbor ethnocentricity one way or another and that each group sees themselves as the superior "in-group" whereas the different and unnatural "Others" only can aspire to be like them. Each group creates and harbors negative attitudes towards the out-group simultaneously creating prejudices against other cultures, groups and individuals (Zolfagharian et al 2014).

The importance of the statue and its representation of the magical society, its ideologies, and its hierarchy become especially noticeable once Voldemort and his Death Eaters take over the magical world. Voldemort's first action is changing the appearance of the statue of the Ministry of Magic; making the statue instead take the shape of "a witch and a wizard sitting on ornately carved thrones" (Rowling DH 2007, 198). It does not take long for Harry to notice that these ornately decorated thrones in reality were mounds of carved humans representing the muggles true place (Rowling DH 2007, 199). The new statue thus shows the discrimination and oppression of muggles whereas the first statue represented the oppression and discrimination of other magical beings. Here one can argue that a discriminating ideology already existed before Voldemort and that it was already represented in the original statue, and that the

limits of this already existing ideology then was pushed to an extremer version of itself (Peppers-Bates et. al. 2012, 112).

This explicit portrayal of oppression is something that Albus Dumbledore, the headmaster of Hogwarts, seems to have been well aware of saying that "the fountain we destroyed tonight told a lie. We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward" (Rowling TOOTP 2003, 834). The fountain was a representation of the supposedly existing peace and harmony found among the magical beings. Dumbledore was, however, well aware of the wizards' discriminations against other magical creatures and beings and was thus able to see through to the truthful meaning of the fountain. According to the ministry of Magic, anyone classified as a magical being would be worthy "of legal rights" and would be given a "voice in the governance of the magical world," (Rowling FBAWTFT 2001, x).

As earlier mentioned, the magical world of *Harry Potter* is a home for many wondrous magical creatures, but those who stand out from all of these magical creatures are, amongst others, the house-elves, Goblins and Centaurs and these will thus be the focus of this essay. The House-elves, Goblins and centaurs are all intelligent creatures and are thus included in the definitions of magical beings since the definition of a magical being is "any creature that has sufficient intelligence to understand the laws of the magical community and to bear part of the responsibility in shaping those laws" (Rowling FBAWTFT 2001, xix). The house-elves, Goblins and centaurs should thus be allowed to attend the wizarding council and be allowed to voice their opinions and affect the laws of the magical world.

Still many wizards refused to acknowledge this right when it came to certain beings, despite their intelligence and their magical abilities which in many cases even exceeded that of the wizards themselves. Beings who were both neglected and denied their rights were the house-elves, the goblins and the centaurs amongst others.

House-elves:

The reader gets introduced to the idea of the existence of hundreds of house-elves in the fourth book in which the reader learns about the house-elves that work at Hogwarts (Rowling TGOF 2000, 154). There are, however, only four house-elves who get mentioned by name, three of which are brought up numerous times; Dobby, Winky and

Kreacher. Dobby's first appearance takes place in the second book and is the first house-elf the reader is introduced to. Dobby is described wearing an old pillowcase with rips to form arm- and legholes, the first thing Dobby does is bow "so low that the end of his long, thin nose touched the carpet" (Rowling TCOS 1998, 12). Winky is the second house-elf to be introduced, but unlike dobby, she never wanted to gain her freedom and thus being sad still believes that she belongs to the Crouch family (Rowling TGOF 2000, 83). Kreacher is the third house-elf; he is old enough to have been passed down in the Black family at least three generations ending up with Harry once his godfather dies (Rowling TOOTP 2003, 99).

The house-elves are a humanoid being with strong and powerful magic, bound by a magical contract into the eternal servitude of certain wealthy wizarding families. This means that house-elves are forced to follow their masters' orders whether they want to or not, allowing wizards to use the house-elves in doing their bidding whether it is something small and easy or bid and dangerous. This creates a hierarchy in the wizarding world where the house-elves are subjugated, and the wizards are given great control over the house-elves. This hierarchy is based on agreements that directly or indirectly benefit the wizards and witches while the house-elves and other magical beings are left on the opposite side. This hierarchy creates groups that dominate and groups that are being dominated and these group memberships are being determined by physical appearances. House-elves and goblins are both subordinated and alienated because they differ from the wizarding ideal image; themselves.

Many wizards, as will be shown, do however not seem to notice the injustice or mistreatment with which the house-elves are treated and accept the house-elves as their subordinates. Furthermore, the wizards and witches seem to have been exposed to these prejudices for so long that these attitudes now have become so common that even kind-hearted wizards overlook them. Hermione, being a muggle-born and thus growing up away from the unconscious biases which the wizarding-children have been subjected to, seems to be the first to truly notice and realize how bad it all is, indignantly stating that the "house-elves get a very raw deal" and wonders why nobody does anything about it (Rowling TGOF 2000, 106). This blind regard with which the dominating group has come to view the subjugated groups and their suffering might not always be conscious but it reinforces the ethnocentric idea of their culture being the normal while the others and their cultures are being seen as inferior and abnormal (Dixson and Rousseau 2005, 16).

This is nothing the wizarding-children understand or truly notice, and Ron therefore replies saying that house-elves are happy and like "being bossed around" and the Weasley twins says that the house-elves believes that "they've got the best job in the world" (Rowling TGOF 2000, 125, 239). Even Ron and the rest of the Weasley family, who are being portrayed as the "good" and kind-hearted wizards, have not been able to evade the deep-rooted unconscious biases towards the other magical beings. Growing up with the knowledge of each magical being having a specific role in the community makes the wizards blind to their mistreatment of the other beings and leads them not to even think of questioning the status quo of the existing hierarchy.

> I do not think Sirius (...) ever saw Kreacher as a being with feelings as acute as a human's (...) Indifference and neglect often do much more damage than outright dislike (…) We wizards have mistreated and abused our fellows for too long, and we are now reaping our reward.
> (Rowling TOOTP 2003, 766-67)

Even Sirius Black, Harry's godfather and another one of the good and kind-hearted wizards, seems to have fallen into the unconscious biases and mistreatment of house-elves. The reader would not expect Sirius to be one of those who fall into such a tendency of discriminating those "lesser" than him. Sirius is the one to tell Harry that to know what a man is truly like, he has to "take a good look at how he treats his inferiors," (Rowling TGOF 2000, 525). Hagrid is another character which the reader does not expect to fall for unconscious biases. The ever-loving and caring half-giant who has yet to meet a magical creature he does not love and care for seem to have fallen for the unconscious biases just like everyone else in the wizarding community. Hagrid explains how it is part of the house-elves' nature to want to serve the wizards and witches and that freeing them would thus be insulting and unkind (Rowling TGOF 2000, 223). Furthermore, even the protagonist, Harry Potter himself, seems to have fallen victim to the unconscious biases.

In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, the second book of the series, the reader sees how Harry opposes the mistreatment and enslavement of house-elves through freeing Dobby. Yet Harry does not free the house-elf he inherits, instead the reader sees how Harry ends up using Kreacher like every other house-elf owner.

> 'to Harry's great satisfaction, Kreacher bowed deeply again and said, with bitter resentment, 'Master thinks of everything and Kreacher must obey him even though Kreacher would much rather be the servant of the

Malfoy boy, oh yes…' 'that is settled then' said Harry. (Rowling THBP 2005 395)

Kreacher, despite being miserable addresses Harry as "master" and is forced to follow every given order. Harry uses Kreacher, he is meticulous and thorough in his orders making sure that Kreacher cannot find a loophole where he can get his own will through (Rowling THBP 2005 395). This is one of the examples where Harry oppresses Kreacher preventing him from acting upon his own desires. This depicts Harry's false empathy, which is the act that occurs when a member of a dominating group believes himself to identify with the subjugated group while it is only done slightly and superficially (Dixson and Rousseau 2005). This can also be because the dominant group only helps the subjugated when they believe there is something to gain from the outcome (Bell 1995, 22).

The house-elves do not have any traditional clothes they are instead only able to dress in old cast-aside pieces of linen, pieces of cloth that left their bony arms and legs as well as all their other differences bare for others to see. This is similar to how those performing at freak shows also lacked traditional clothes. Instead, both parties were provided with negligible articles of clothing that emphasized their differences and thus further alienated them from the norm. this othering further reinforced the idea of them being unworthy inferior. The house-elves are forced to stay loyal to the families which they serve, having to obey their every order. The house-elves are compelled to punish themselves if they end up failing to obey their masters' orders, the punishment might take the form of ironing their hands or hitting their heads, all very inhumane ways (Rowling TCOS 1998, 14). The house-elves have never truly explicitly expressed their interest in freedom despite all the physical and emotional abuse which the house-elves face at the hands of or due to their master's actions. In fact, apart from Dobby, the house-elves seem to fear being detached from their masters and families, this proves that the house-elves have with time come to identify themselves more with their masers than they do with their own individual person (Peppers-Bates and Rust) 2012, 113-114). This ties in with the notion that racialized groups often come to gradually embrace and identify themselves with the ascribed identity they are given, becoming a self-fulfilling self-ascribed group. Furthermore, the physical violence which they are subjected to serves two different reasons, one is maintaining the existing hierarchy and the other is to prevent rebellion. The dominating group, in this case the wizards and witches, aims to keep their power and their higher status and thus uses violence and

brutality to force their subordinates into accepting their position. Secondly, by using violence the subordinates will fear rebelling and the dominant group can thus stop the possibility of a change in power and governing control (Mills 1997, 83-86). The violence is therefore reinforced through the magical contract as the house-elves are forced to punish themselves when failing to obey their master's commands making it impossible for the house-elves to oppose their masters and thus in turn reinforcing the dominant group's power and control.

Nevertheless, the house-elf is also expected to serve until he or she either dies or gets set free, the latter very rarely taking place "A house-elf must be set free, sir" and if they are not set free they have to "serve the family until he dies, sir…" (Rowling TCOS 1998, 14). Furthermore, most house-elves get treated like property, and it appears that the house-elves have reached a point where they no longer view themselves as individuals, continuously refereeing to themselves in third person. They appear to have grown into believing they truly are inferior to wizards, getting upset over the idea of being set free "House-elves is not supposed to have fun, *Harry Potter* (…) House-elves does what they is told" (Rowling TGOF 2000, 84). They no longer view themselves as individuals allowed to have fun or be sad, their goal is to always please and do as they are told. This shows that the house-elves, for the most part, have come to see themselves through the eyes of their oppressors and accepting themselves as inferiors (Du Bois 2007, 34).

The house-elves are amongst the more powerful non-wizarding magical beings presented in the *Harry Potter* series. House-elf magic is at least equal to that of the wizards and in many instances even stronger than that of the wizards. The reader is presented with quite a lot of evidence of the extent of the house-elf abilities; house-elves are able to perform magic without wands, a feat wizards need to work a long time to achieve and even then not to the same extent of the house-elves. Furthermore, house-elves magic can tamper with wizarding spells undetected as well as track wizards and break binding rules, making the house-elves capable of performing more intricate magic than the wizards. The house-elves are, however, unable to use their magic freely as they are bound by the magical contract, limiting their magic to fulfilling their master's orders. House-elves are also unable to talk freely; they cannot speak ill of their masters or tell what they know seeing as they have to keep their masters' secrets and stay silent. This highlights how they are silenced, creating a superior identity for wizards and witches and giving value to their opinions as well as reinforcing the

subjection and lack of value of the house-elves. This notion stays with the house-elves whether they are bound by the magical contract or they have gotten free leaving the free house-elves to suffer a double-consciousness struggling with internal conflicts of whether they are their own masters free to do as they please and still getting the same urges they had when they were bound by the magical contract.

The magical contract does thus take away the freedom and free will of the house-elves, an act punishable by a life sentence in Azkaban if "used on a fellow human" (Rowling TGOF 2000, 183). The Imperius curse is one of the three unforgivable curses, if cast successfully it enables the caster to fully control the victim, thus creating a chance to enslave and control someone against their will (Rowling TGOF 2000, 179). The Imperius curse and the magical contract are both enforced by magic and have similar functions yet only the curse is forbidden since it can be used on the dominating group; the wizards and witches. The magical contract is, however, not seen as forbidden or even simply bad since it is used to bind house-elves; non-human magical beings. The discrimination and othering of the house-elves are here based on their physical appearance not being in accordance to the socially accepted norm of being "human". The othering here is similar to the 19th and 20th century where real-life people in England were put on display for the dominant group's entertainment (Appendix 14C 2007, 1-3). These people were, much like the magical beings, physically different and where thus marginalized and ostracized until they no longer were protected by society or law. The dominating group in both the magical as well as the real world achieved their status of being ideal through shifting the perception of the other to place themselves in the center by banishing the other to the margins (Thomson 1997, 62-63). Many of those who performed in freak shows and human exhibitions were purchased and therefore like the house-elves owned by their managers (Thomson 1997, 72-77).

Goblins:

The goblins are, similarly to the house-elves, mistreated by the wizards and considered to be lesser beings. They are often called different derogatory names such as "ickle goblins" and suffer from great prejudices being reduced from individuals into simply accountants working in a bank. Neglected by the wizards and often viewed as insignificant, not many care to remember them, their names or even their history,

discussing a question that came in their exam Ron says I "Couldn't remember all the goblin rebels' names, so I invented a few" stating that nobody would notice it (Rowling TGOF 2000, 520). The goblins may not have been treated with the same amount of physical abuse as the house-elves were subjected to. The disrespect they were subjected to was however mentally, emotionally and psychically abusing. The performers of the freak show were similarly treated, neglected and disrespected with a self-absorbed audience uncaring of their suffering.

The goblins are some of the first magical beings the reader gets introduced to, they are described as humanoid creatures "about a head shorter than Harry. He had a swarthy, clever face, a pointed beard and, Harry noticed, very long fingers and feet" (Rowling TPS 1997, 82). Harry is told to be careful and is warned not to mess with them (Rowling TPS 1997, 73). Goblins could "be placed in the "dangerous but able to be used" category, yet their intelligence and power seem far greater (…) Goblins, then, clearly have more power than any of the other nonhuman species depicted in Rowling's novel" (Horne 2010, 89). The goblins are intelligent and prideful beings who did not kindly take to the wizards assuming that they naturally are at the top of the magical beings' hierarchy (Horne 2010, 89). The goblins did therefore, unlike the house-elves, not enjoy working for the wizards and have throughout the books continually resisted their subordination and the wizard's superiority refusing to accept the wizard as their master (Rowling DH 2007, 243-44). Like the house-elves the goblins are mistreated and discriminated against because of their physical appearance. The goblins are described to look like something close to a villain and accompanied by the warning against them, and thus it is no wonder that Harry keeps his distance. The lack of respect which the goblins are presented leads to great tension and to their hatred towards wizards and witches. Social norms in the real world have however always included discrimination against those who seem different creating biases as well as unfair and unrealistic requirements for those who wish to be a functioning part of society. If someone was unable to meet the set requirements they would be marginalized and seen as inferior to the rest. The goblins' physical appearance made them an easy target to the misconceptions and stereotypes being spread and these misconceptions were then reinforced by the fact that wizards and witches placed themselves at the top of the social hierarchy. The lack of knowledge about goblins combined with their appearance has made them generally perceived as wild, dangerous and erratic making them a bad company to keep (Horne 2010, 91).

There is plenty of evidence that supports the goblins being amongst the more powerful non-wizarding magical beings in *Harry Potter*. Goblins are clever, unafraid to speak their minds and stick up for themselves and they have also rebelled countless times throughout the wizarding history (Rowling TGOF 2000, 379). The goblins are a well-established and intelligent race that has come to play a vital role in the wizarding community. The goblins are amongst the magical beings who can perform magic without a vessel such as a wand. They were also well known for their magic abilities especially when it comes to the handling of metal and the forging of swords and armors: "Goblins know how to work metal in a way wizards have never-" (Rowling DH 2007, 488). Despite their accomplishments, cleverness, intelligence and magical abilities the goblins found themselves excluded "the wizarding world excluded goblins from the privileges it accorded itself (...) Not only have the wizards excluded goblins from their meetings; they have also denied them the privilege of carrying a wand" (Horne 2010, 90).

The goblins are first introduced in the first book where the reader discovers that they run the wizarding bank Gringotts. This shows that the goblins have significant control over the wizarding economy, even if this control is not definite. Despite being a vital part of the wizarding society, the goblins tried attending the first International Confederation of Wizards only to be refused and ejected (Rowling TOOTP 2003, 726). While such an exclusion had created a rift between the wizards and non-wizarding magical beings, the power differentiation between wizards and non-wizards was only fully set once the wizards created "clause three of the code of wand use" prohibiting the goblins from carrying wands (Rowling DH 2007, 132). The goblins always felt the injustice and institutional oppression of being denied the right to carry a wand saying that this topic "has long been contested between wizards and goblins" (HP DH 488). Even though the goblins can wield magic without wands, they hugely believed that a wand would have aided in their defenses against the dark forces of Voldemort. They therefore believed that the wizards denied them wands in fear of them gaining more power.

> 'The right to carry a wand,' said the goblin quietly, 'has long been contested between wizards and goblins.' 'Well, goblins can do magic without wands,' said Ron. 'That is immaterial! Wizards refuse to share their secrets of wandlore with other magical beings, they deny us the possibility of extending our powers!' (Rowling DH 2007, 489)

This quote shows that the members of a dominant group have trouble understanding the suffering of the subjugated groups. Being unable to understand the issues surrounding the goblins can be compared to the freak show audiences and their inability to see the issues with the human performances. This incapability to empathize and understand, whether it is meant or unconscious leads to the dismissal of the subjugated group's opinions which in turn leads to them being further marginalized making the powerless. With time this subjugation leads to the dominated groups losing the socially recognized rights and voices leaving them unheard (Duncan 2002, 134). According to Barratt, the oppressor is usually driven by his or her fear into viciously subjugating the Other; this fear is then in turn driven further by the assumption of certain behavioral traits being imbedded in the nature of certain groups (Barratt 2012, 78-79). This form of thinking further upholds the already ingrained stereotypes suggesting that the different behavioral traits are certainly present in every member of the targeted group (Barratt 2012, 78). Such a mentality leads to full groups of wizards and magical beings being blamed and punished for the wrongdoings of one of its members. The goblins and other non-human creatures were denied the right to carry a wand due to the many goblin rebellions. "Yet the goblins are clearly subordinated in some way to wizarding government control" this prohibition is thus placed for the wizards and witches to be able to keep control and power as well as to stop the possibility of a change in power and governing control from taking place (Horne 2010, 89-91).

The goblins have never been acknowledged as the wizards' equals, instead they have always been ousted and demeaned. Unlike the house-elves who grows up believing there is nothing better than serving a wizard, the goblins are not happy with their loss of the little control they once had in the wizarding world. Griphook, one of the goblins, exclaims during a conversation with Ron and Harry that the issue always has been about how the wizards believe themselves to be superior and in the process neglect the others magical beings and their wellbeing even when the Dark Lord becomes as powerful as ever "Gringotts falls under wizarding rule, house-elves are slaughtered, and who amongst the wand-carriers protests?" (Rowling DH 2007, 395). This is the first time the reader encounters a member of an oppressed group who is explicitly "allowed to speak against institutionally based wizardly oppression rather than against a specific wizard gone bad" (Horne 2010, 93).

Wizards do however not only discriminate other magical beings and other witches and wizards for being born differently, they also have prejudices towards each

other based on which groups they belong to. A great example that demonstrates this is how the students belonging to Slytherin get treated by their fellow classmates, teachers and other witches and witches in the wizarding community solely based on them being sorted into a specific Hogwarts house.

House-Stereotyping and discrimination:

Most of the events found in *Harry Potter* take place in Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, one of the magical boarding schools found in the magical world. Hogwarts have four founders and was thus divided into four Houses, each House bearing its founders last name, namely Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin. Each House represents the values, traits and qualities which were valued by its founder. As earlier mentioned, J. K. Rowling made good use of anagrams, making sure that each name represented its owner, this is even present in her choice of the founders' names. Godric Gryffindor's given name literally translates to "god-like" which relates back to strength and dauntlessness. Helga Hufflepuff's name is based on "Huff" and "Puff", puff being an old English term for bakery. This is very fitting since Helga was famous for her food related spells. Rowena Ravenclaw's name is close to "ravenous" refereeing to her insatiable hunger for knowledge, and Salazar Slytherin's name is not far from "sly" or "slithering" referring to his slyness.

According to Eccleshare Gryffindor values courage, bravery, chivalry, friendship and dauntlessness. Ravenclaw values knowledge, intelligence, creativity, wit and learning (Rowling TPS 1997, 130). Hufflepuff values patience, loyalty, kindness, hard work and justice. Slytherin values leadership, resourcefulness, cunningness and ambition. Each House also has a mascot representing its values and symbolizing the nature of the House; Gryffindors mascot is a lion, Ravenclaws mascot is an eagle, Hufflepuffs mascot is a badger and Slytherins mascot is a snake (2002, 62).

While alive the founders would hand-pick the students for their Houses and fearing how the selections would take place after their death the founders created a sorting hat and gave their added knowledge to it. Henceforth the sorting hat was the used in selecting students and sorting them into the respective Houses. All students who attend Hogwarts were to be sorted at the start of their first year, during a sorting ceremony, into one of the four Houses. The sorting hat sorts each student into the House which the hat believes to be most fitting and appropriate, according to the student's

qualities and traits. Once sorted, there is no chance or possibility for the students to change Houses. The students were then expected to spend the entirety of their six or seven schoolyears in their appointed Houses. The students live, eat, sleep and study with the rest of their House, the Houses thus function as living and learning communities for their student body. The appointed Houses also become the student's direct family within Hogwarts as each House competes against the other Houses for the House cup. "While you are at Hogwarts, your triumphs will earn your House points, while any rule breaking will lose House points." (Rowling TPS 1997, 126). Each student's actions thus have a direct impact on his or her House and the other students in it. To make matters even more tense for the students, the Houses are put to compete against each other for the House cup and the quidditch cup. The House cup is a more general tournament where all the Houses compete against each other while the quidditch cup is firstly based on specific teams where certain Houses have to win against each other to be allowed to compete in the final match. These competitions have created a deep-set rivalry between the Houses in general but between specific Houses in particular.

It is quite obvious from the start that the reader will get to experience a complex magical world with many stereotypes. The novels indirectly encourage the reader to reflect on and take critical distance from these forms of hierarchies and discrimination as it throughout the series gives examples on wizards and witches who break the stereotype. The examples are however few and sparsely placed throughout the series. J. K. Rowling introduces the idea of the existence of stereotypes in the early chapters of the first book through her creation of the earlier mentioned four Houses, each one of them representing the specific ideals and certain traits which its students will possess and thus differ from the next. People tend to feel attracted towards the participants of their own group merely based on their common membership, each member thus in turn becomes a representative and prototype of the group as a whole (Singh 2006, 194). Members of the same group also tend to be treated as a group instead of as individuals leading them to lose their individuality and all diversities associated with their individuality (McGarty et.al 2004, 4). This sets a strong base for the creation of stereotypes and misjudgments seeing as each group tends to see themselves as the norm and the others as the abnormal.

This is also why many students choose to avoid and sparsely interact with students from other Houses. Even though each of the four Houses represents certain

traits and are thus all different from each other, it is the Slytherins who are seen as the most different and thus viewed by the other Houses as the Other. The Slytherin House is the one to suffer the most negative stereotyping and thus also those who is subjected to the most prejudices. Furthermore, the novels have a sharp focus on the wrongdoers of Slytherin and often-times dim and barely acknowledge the kind-hearted Slytherin characters and their efforts thus ultimately portraying the Slytherins as evil. Characters such as Regulus Black who was amongst the first to stand up against Voldemort and lost his life when he bravely went after the horcruxes trying to destroy them are often overlooked due to the sections about him being so short and undetailed compared to other parts of the book. Another example is Andromeda Tonks, a Slytherin and a member of the order of the Phoenix. She put herself in danger's way repeatedly to save those she cares for and ultimately dies in the battle of Hogwarts. There is a focus on the evilness of the Slytherins instead of portraying equal examples of the Slytherins being good and bad.

Growing up away from the wizarding world Harry has very little information about the wizarding world, its rules, the society and the prejudices found there. Yet it does not take long before Harry is subjected to the stereotype surrounding the Slytherin House. The first thing Harry hears about the Hogwarts Houses is "There's not a single witch or wizard who went bad who wasn't in Slytherin. You-Know-Who was one", this is also amongst the first information given to Harry about the wizarding world (Rowling TPS 1997, 90). The Slytherin House is thus introduced as the bad and evil House to Harry and the reader very early on in the first book. Furthermore, as Bulstrode Millicent, a classmate, gets sorted into Slytherin Harry cannot help but think that he thought the Slytherins looked like an unpleasant lot. Even though Harry at this moment thinks that it might be due to all he had heard about the Slytherins, he soon just learns to hate them. This might be what propels Harry into pleading with the Sorting hat to be placed into any House but Slytherin (Rowling TPS 1997, 133). Harry falls victim to the unconscious biases even though he already early on learns to question the established structures and existing stereotypes and to distrust those who do not question the existing traditions and instead chooses to cling to them blindly. Harry often finds himself placed in situations where his elder's authority seems to be wrong and misguided at best and corrupt at worst (Cooley 2005, 29). From this moment on Harry seem to have fallen for the stereotyping of the Slytherins. Harry is seen consoling Neville saying that he

shouldn't be unhappy and instead be proud since he was sorted into Gryffindor and not into "stinking Slytherin" (Rowling TPS 1997, 236).

Education and Discussion

Most schools in today's society have at least one multicultural class, it is therefore important to bring up discussions about othering and discrimination to avoid segregation and segmentation. In this section, the curriculum and syllabus will be used together with the earlier mentioned terminology in connection to the analysis section to showcase the significance of working with the *Harry Potter* series in the multicultural English classroom. The focus will be on how the analysis of the text can be used as a tool in eliciting empathy through preventing prejudices and bringing awareness to the existing unconscious biases.

The classroom should be a safe place where all students feel welcome and are given equal opportunity to prepare for lifelong learning. Education should thus establish mutual respect for human rights and impart both knowledge and the fundamental democratic values which the Swedish society is based on while emphasizing the importance of equality, individuality, integrity and individual freedom. Education should additionally promote the understanding of others as well as foster the ability to empathize. This is to be achieved by nurturing and encouraging the individual sense of justice and tolerance (Skolverket 2011, 4-9). Furthermore, the curriculum explicitly states that "intolerance must be confronted with knowledge, open discussion and active measures" (Skolverket 2011, 9). It is therefore important that the education lifts up and enables the discussion of issues such as othering, discrimination and prejudices, despite the possibility of them being problematic or sensitive. According to Wan teaching about tolerance in school is imperative in fostering peaceful global citizens (Wan 2006, 140). Using *Harry Potter* in order to make students more aware of the existing unconscious biases and how to handle them and thus prompting empathy has many advantages. It is, however, important to be aware that empathic reading also comes with the danger of empathizing with the oppressor instead of the oppressed (Lindhé 2015, 240-241). Reading literature exposes readers to othering and discrimination with the hope of making them emphasize with certain individuals and perspectives and block the empathy from others. The literature thus creates an "Other's Other" in order to help

the reader understand the Other, and this phenomenon is referred to as the paradox of narrative empathy (Lindhé 2015, 240-241). The reader is thus encouraged to empathize with certain characters and individuals while at the same time discouraged from empathizing with others (Lindhé 2015, 240-241). There is therefore a risk of the students empathizing with the individuals and values which the teacher wants to discourage. Wan argues and emphasizes the importance of the teacher guiding students while reading since they otherwise risk reproducing the stereotypical values instead of developing understanding, tolerance and empathy (Wan 2006, 142). Bringing awareness is of great importance since the Swedish school should participate in eliminating discriminating tendencies such as xenophobia and intolerance (Skolverket 2011, 4, 10). Furthermore, research has confirmed that fictional stories help expand the emotional responses and compassion. This helps the students better understand themselves as well as others, leading to the eliciting empathy thus helping them improve their social skills (Keen 2007, 99). This makes the *Harry Potter* series a great candidate when working with empathy.

Moreover, using the magical creatures as a starting point to discuss the multiple layers of unconscious biases found in our society makes it easier for the students to participate without having to worry about how others might perceive them. One thing all these magical beings have in common is the physical and magical differences which sets them apart from the wizards and witches and the wizarding-ideals of the perfect specimen; themselves. This difference in physical appearance has made the magical beings an easy target of discrimination. The same goes for the upper secondary classes, today's society promotes certain stereotypical and often unachievable beauty standards which the students feel the strong need to adhere to. Students can thus often be bullied and discriminated against due to their appearance. Through implementing empathic reading and discussing the treatment of the magical beings and how they were marginalized due to their appearance in connection to today's beauty standards, students are able to gain more awareness of the unconscious biases they might hold towards other students.

Furthermore, Sweden is a multicultural society harboring many refugees and immigrants, and some students might thus have experienced such unfair treatment while others might be unaware of its different forms as they themselves have not encountered them (Zamudio et al. 2011, 93-94). Using the novels and discussing the mistreatment of magical beings thus allow for all students to participate without fear of

being in the spotlight for having shared similar experiences. Through using the *Harry Potter* series, the students are thus able to distantiate themselves from these sensitive issues making it easier for them to participate in the discussion since it will be a discussion about the othering and discrimination of magical beings. Discrimination and othering are heavily loaded concepts with many different perspectives and can for example be about physical appearance, race and belies only to name a few and can thus vary. It is valuable to open up the discussion for the multiple forms and aspects of othering and discrimination so students are able to better understand that othering and discrimination can be a visible and explicit act as well as an indirect and unconscious one. It is also of importance to bring forth the fact that people fall victim to othering and discrimination for different reasons.

This is of relevance since the series takes place in England and the national curriculum states that secondary school students should have the opportunity to gain more knowledge about English speaking countries (Skolverket 2011). It is also highly relevant, since the novels are situated in a world and timeline very similar to our own, to include a historical point of view where students are made aware of the past values so students better can understand the author and her motives. By giving the students a historical point of view the students would be able to gain more knowledge about the freak shows and mistreatment of physically different or disabled people who lived in Europe and England between the mid-16th century and until the 20th century. This would in turn help students better understand the past and thus also gain a better and wider understanding of the present and today's society, its values and its norms. The house-elves and goblins amongst other magical beings would represent the "freaks" and how people viewed them as something to be looked at yet not truly seen. After discussing the historical point of view and freak shows the students would also be more aware of today's social norms when it comes to physical appearance. A relevant lesson here is discussing today's beauty norms and stereotypes as well as how they affect the students.

The mistreatment of the magical beings can through a historical perspective also be connected to the racial discrimination of both African Americans as well as Jews. The discussion would then be linked back to the Swedish society and immigration, it is however important to always make sure and emphasize that discrimination and intolerance are highly unacceptable in class (Skolverket 2011). It is important, after giving the students a historical background about othering and

discrimination, to be able to link the discussed topics and concepts to today's society. The focus lies thus here forth on the unconscious biases and how one can gain awareness and be able to avoid falling into unconsciously discriminating or excluding others.

To be able to take steps towards freeing ourselves from unconscious biases we first have to understand what they are, how they are created and then focus on what we can do to eliminate them. As earlier stated, unconscious biases are often unconscious prejudices based on existing social stereotypes about certain people and certain groups. Our unconscious minds build rules about the world and society and how they work based on the repeated information, stories, patterns and associations which we have acquired either by experiences or by hearing them from others (Ross 2014). After presenting the students with the earlier introduced stereotypes, prejudices and unconscious biases found in the series a discussion should ensue about their beliefs and attitudes towards them. Furthermore, the students should be given ample time to discuss which unconscious biases they think still exist in today's society and what they think can be done to avoid falling into upholding them.

The teacher should then explain that it will take time to be able to detangle ourselves from the unconscious biases since they have been deeply rooted in our societies and in our minds for a long time. It is, however, not impossible to overcome them if we know what they look like, how they are presented and how we can disentangle ourselves from them. Stereotypes and unconscious biases are often taught and picked up from early childhood since children are curious and thus pick up on the social norms and social categorizations. They are created and spread through the existing social networks, and they are then upheld and maintained by the society (Lyons et al. 2008, 62). They can also be created and shared by smaller groups when their members share common experiences, behaviors or beliefs and act to differentiate their group from others. Once created, stereotypes and unconscious biases are often preserved even if they are proven inaccurate (Lyons et al. 2008, 59).

Our minds are flexible and can thus overcome unconscious biases through the use of some strategies. The first step is to surrender the illusion of being objective; we have to accept that biases are embedded in our societies and our minds. Secondly, we have to analyze our own actions, beliefs and compare them to our automatic assumptions to determine which unconscious biases we are dealing with. It is also important to then see how accurate our information, beliefs and assumptions are.

Thirdly, take a moment to think before we act instead of letting our unconsciousness take the decision for us. Focusing on the people we meet, taking notice of how they actually are and listening to their perspectives before judging them is also important. Lastly, we have to recognize the stereotypes we have come to know and try to overrule them by seeking individuality (Meads 2015, 50).

Conclusion

Fantasy and fiction are often viewed as a form of escape for their reader, they do however also function as a great way for the reader to be able to distantiate himself while critically analyzing and interpreting which is important when it comes to the norm-critical education. The magical world of *Harry Potter* harbors many socially ingrained stereotypes, prejudices and unconscious biases just like the real world. The defamiliarization created in the *Harry Potter* series thus allows the reader to gain a new perspective of the existing hierarchies, stereotypes and ideologies found in the series as well as the real world.

This study aimed to present how the *Harry Potter* series can be used as a tool in the multicultural classroom and introduction classes to discuss othering, discrimination and unconscious biases as well as teaching empathy by alerting students that othering and discrimination are often based on unconscious biases found within the society. By concentrating on these themes, the *Harry Potter* series was analyzed in connection to the fundamental values found in the Swedish curriculum and syllabus.

The analyses have shown that prejudices and discrimination are omnipresent throughout the series being one of the issues which the characters are exposed to and have to handle. There are prejudices, discrimination and unconscious biases against magical beings such as house-elves and goblins. The house-elves have been subjugated for generations upon generations leading to their acceptance of their position and in many cases them being afraid of being set free. The goblins are slightly better off still refusing their subjugation and occasionally standing up for themselves, something the house-elves are unable to do due to the magical contract.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the dominant "in-group" of wizards and witches will keep their power and control for as long as they can and for as long as there is something for them to gain. Subjugating other beings thus serves as an assurance of them staying at the top of the hierarchy. The dominating groups are able

to stay in power through inflicting physical, mental and emotional abuse onto the subjugated groups rendering them powerless and unable to rebel. Discrimination and othering are always going to be present in the treatment of other magical beings seeing as there is a huge gap between them and the wizards and witches.

Further studies could therefore focus on performing a similar analysis but shifting the focus to other magical creatures such as giants and werewolves where the reader is also provided with a counter narrative and is thus able to see the story through the eyes of both the oppressor and the oppressed. Another interesting analysis would be of how *The Handmaid's Tale* portrays stereotypes and unconscious biases.

Moreover, the thesis has argued that providing the students with examples of such sensitive issues in the form of a novel helps ease the discussion seeing as it shifts the focus from the student's own experiences to the examples provided.

Based on the analyses and discussion of this essay, it can be concluded that the *Harry Potter* series introduces the reader to come of the important issues found in today's society, such as discrimination and othering based on the physical appearance. Through emphatical reading the students will most likely be able to acquire the needed tools to recognize and handle unconscious biases as well as be more empathic towards others.

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