

## Are Personality Traits in Harry Potter Novels Gender-Based? The Case of Harry, Ron and Hermione

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**Abstract**

Humans display several different attitudes towards others and towards the life situations and challenges they encounter. Gender is said to be a factor that can determine one's likeability to show a certain attitude rather than another. Traditionally speaking, men are expected to act one way towards something, while women are expected to act in a different way towards the same thing. This paper aims to identify the extent to which the Harry Potter series abides by, or challenges, the traditional gender stereotypes of human attitudes and reactions. Thus, this paper should help to decide if the three main characters in Harry Potter: Harry, Ron and Hermione, are depicted, in terms of their personality traits, on the basis of traditional gender norms. On a wider scope, the paper aims to investigate the role that widely-read fiction, such as Harry Potter, plays to reinforce traditional ideas or to encourage more liberating views. To achieve these aims, the attitudes and reactions of the three major characters of the novels are to be analyzed. Two of these characters are male: Harry and Ron, while the third: Hermione, is female. The attitudes and reactions of these three characters are to be measured according to how much they take risks or follow the rules, how much they are caring and nurturing, rude, and persistent.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Men and women tend to abide by some gender norms so that they could be accepted by their community. Gender is one's state of being male or female in relation to the social and cultural roles which are appropriate for men or women. The norm is defined as a situation or type of behavior which is expected and considered to be typical. During childhood, boys and girls are put into social contexts that help them adopt behaviors and possess abilities that are expected from them on the basis of their gender. Parents and caregivers might reinforce stereotypical

behaviors in their kids. Characters of Harry Potter both adopt and challenge gender norms. *Harry Potter* series of novels is about a young boy who finds out he is a wizard by the time he turns eleven years old. Harry goes to Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry where he learns the arts of magic. He becomes a friend of Ron and Hermione, his classmates. Together, they fight for a great cause, which is ending the evil of Voldemort, a dark wizard who committed many crimes, including the murder of Harry's parents.

## **2. Gender Norms for Boys/Men and Girls/Women**

According to Feingold (1994), men are found to be interested in immersing themselves in activity and excitement. Women, on the other hand, are more expressive of positive feelings and warmth (pp. 452-456). Thus, it is more expected of men to be fearless and to be prone to engage themselves in dangerous acts. Women, however, are expected to be more caring and attentive to others' feelings. According to Arrindell (2000), women are easily scared, as compared to men, and they are more affected by terrifying situations (pp. 509-512). Similarly, women tend to see dangers as more threatening than these dangers already are (Menzies and Clarke, 1995: p. 43). Teenage girls are also more prone to develop anxiety disorders (Lewinsohn et al., 1998: pp. 109-111).

In a study conducted by Hillier and Morrongiello (1998), male and female children estimated risks differently. Female children perceived more risks than male children in such situations as riding a bike without a helmet for protection (pp. 229–238). Thus, it is expected of boys and men to be more edgy and to seek risks, in comparison to girls and women. According to 150 research papers reviewed by Byrnes, Miller and Schafer (1999), there has been a difference in male and female subjects' readiness for risk-taking. Male subjects were found to be more prone to take risks than the female subjects (p. 377).

Social Role theory suggests that men and women act according to their roles in the society. These roles embed some personality traits and attitudes that would help people perform their roles properly. Men, for instance, spend much of their day outside the house, while women give birth to and care for children. As a result, men display more assertive qualities, while women show more nurture and concern for others (Eagly, 2013: p. 15).

Both men and women can be aggressive. Yet, the kinds of aggression they employ, and the degree to which men and women are aggressive differ. There are two types of aggression: verbal, and nonverbal or paralinguistic. Both verbal and paralinguistic aggression will be dealt with in the analysis section. Verbal aggression includes using insults against other people (Murray et al., 2010: p. 44). It is generally used to express anger or to cause the subject of the aggression emotional pain. Paralinguistic aggression, on the other hand, is the use of paralinguistic features, like the tone of voice, to attack or threaten others.

Boys and men are assumed to be more generally aggressive than girls and women. Research in 120 countries supports this assumption, suggesting that women resort to verbal and physical aggression much less than men do (Brehm et al., 2005: p. 90; Cox et al., 2000: pp. 110-112). According to Fagot and Hagan (1986), female children adopt a tone of voice that is three times quieter and more amicable than the tone of voice of their male counterparts (p. 11). Anger is more likely to be accepted in boys than girls. On the other hand, people expect girls to be more able to control their emotions than boys (Garner et al., 1997: pp. 675-681).

Similarly, in a research conducted by Hubbard, school boys have displayed more anger than girls.

Gender stereotypes also define the tendency in men and women to persist. Persistence refers to one's likelihood to persevere, to keep trying to fulfill a given objective. Gender norms indicate that men are more prone to persist than women, attributing persistence as a personality trait to masculinity (Bowles and Flynn, 2010: p. 769).

### **3. Attitudes to Rules and Risk-Taking**

Two of the three characters analyzed in the paper are reckless and hasty, and they have little respect to rules. The third character can be exceptionally careful and obedient to the law. However, all characters display different levels of the two opposite sides of the spectrum of reactions to rules and risks.

A lot of the situations Harry and Ron are put in where they have to choose whether to act according to the rules, or to defy them, witness their agreement to a certain mutual behavior or reaction. Thus, part of this analysis will focus on Harry and Ron together.

Harry, Ron and Hermione share a strong friendship that lasts for the seven years they spend at Hogwarts, and as we read on the last chapter of the last book, it goes on while they are adults (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 590). However, Harry and Ron, are particularly close to each other as compared to how close they are to Hermione as their friend. Thus, it is understood why they do a lot of things together, and why they face multiple challenges by one another's side.

Challenged by Malfoy to a fake duel to set them up, both Harry and Ron are motivated to accept the invitation to the alleged duel. The duel is not legal, and it requires them to be out of bed at night, which is also not legal. The two friends risk getting caught and causing their school house to lose points as punishment to their action (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 165). Their behavior reflects their lack of respect to the school administration. It also means that they do not pay enough attention to the interests of their classmates.

On their second year, both Harry and Ron miss the train to the school because of Dobby's attempts to make Harry miss the school year for his safety. Harry and Ron decide, then, to take Ron's father's magic car to get to school. Doing so, they risk being spotted by muggles, which would threaten the magical world existence. Besides, they jeopardize Ron's father's career. Moreover, they subject themselves to be punished at school, which might have escalated to their expulsion (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: pp. 72-77). On a similar occasion, they use Mr. Weasley's car to get Harry out of his aunt's house, which puts them both in the same risks mentioned earlier (pp. 27-29).

Harry and Ron both do not mind using the Marauder's map to spy on others moving inside Hogwarts, or to find secret passageways around the castle. If they are discovered using the map, they might face detention or any sort of punishment (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 209). Thus, they violate the high ethics of respecting others' privacy, and they risk being punished, as well.

Furthermore, when the Dursleys do not sign the agreement that allows Harry to go to Hogsmead, Ron advises Harry to ask Prof. McGonagall to sign the agreement for him. Harry listens to Ron's advice and tries to get the agreement signed, although it is not safe for Harry to go around outside the castle, to Hogsmead in this case, knowing that the man who is said to have caused his parents is at large:

“Black’s not fool enough to try anything in Hogsmeade,” said Ron. “Ask McGonagall if you can go this time, Harry. The next one might not be for ages —”

“Ron!” said Hermione. “Harry’s supposed to stay in school —”

“He can’t be the only third year left behind,” said Ron. “Ask McGonagall, go on, Harry —”

“Yeah, I think I will,” said Harry, making up his mind. (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 152).

As for Harry's attitude towards rules and risk-taking, he repeatedly puts himself in danger for others' sake. He plays the major role in saving Ginny from the Chamber of Secrets (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: pp. 321-342). He risks his own life to keep the Philosopher's Stone from the wrong hands (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: pp. 309-318). Then, he chooses to go to save his godfather, Sirius Black, when he thinks Sirius is in danger. As a result, Harry fights against expert dark wizards at the ministry (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 718-748).

On another occasion, Harry attacks Professor Umbridge at the ministry of magic because she is terrifying an innocent witch. Harry is furious to watch Umbridge mistreat people while faking a pure-blooded origin for herself (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 212). He takes the risk of casting a spell over Umbridge although the ministry is filled with people who are looking for him as the top wanted person at that time.

Harry risks his life again when he sets off with Dumbledore to a cave which is said to have a connection with Voldemort's Horcruxes. Dumbledore is not at his best, physically speaking, and it is Harry's first time to visit that cave. However, once Dumbledore asks Harry to accompany him to retrieve one of the Horcruxes, the latter does not hesitate at all, showing a readiness to take such uncalculated risk (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: p. 457).

When it comes to respecting rules, Luasuk (2011) suggests that Harry has learned to adhere to the school rules as he joins Hogwarts, behaving appropriately and getting enrolled into school activities and competitions where he follows these rules (p. 32). However, Harry does not easily restrain himself from breaking the rules. Though he sometimes holds his anger to avoid undesirable consequences, Harry can put himself at serious risks. So, when Aunt Marge speaks ill of his parents, Harry does not restrain himself from causing her harm. Although his reaction is partially involuntary, Harry is the one to have let his anger take over his action instead of controlling it. His reaction could have led to his suspension from Hogwarts for violating the ministry rules (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 25-32).

Harry also does not mind taking risks out of curiosity. He finds a Pensieve inside Snape's office, and feels tempted to see what is inside it. The Pensieve, which is a device used for keeping memories to be watched at any time, contains Snape's most private memories. Harry's terrible relationship with Snape, and most importantly, the latter's position as a school

professor, do not scare Harry away from spying on Snape's memories (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 590).

Harry finds out that Snape's memories included bullying and abuse done by his father and his godfather. He, then, takes another risk of investigating his father's real personality. Harry insists on talking to Sirius, his godfather, about what he has seen inside Snape's Pensieve. Harry knows that there is a possibility that his father was indeed that awful teenager that Harry has watched abuse Snape. However, Harry is willing to handle whatever Sirius has to reveal about his father (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 615-622).

Harry's curiosity puts him at risk one more time. Harry becomes obsessed with this mysterious potions book he finds on his sixth year at school. He not only reads it feverishly, he also tries some of the spells which the anonymous original owner has included in the margins. Harry is not ready to listen to his friends' warnings against his attachment to the book, and his use of unregistered spells, which may prove to be too dangerous. He actually uses a spell from the book against Draco Malfoy, which leaves the latter severely injured and covered in his own blood (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 199-201).

When trapped with his friends by a group of death eaters inside the ministry, Harry decides to stall until he can figure out how to run away. He keeps on talking and asking questions to the death eaters, risking the possibility of causing them to lose their temper and attack him or any of his friends. Harry crosses the limit when he speaks about Voldemort being a half-blood wizard, meaning that he has a muggle parent. Voldemort and his followers glorify the idea of pure-bloodedness, so such a remark made by Harry would be an insult to Voldemort. Moreover, Harry uses Voldemort's name without a title while talking, which makes it even harder for the death eaters to tolerate Harry's remark (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 722). Similarly, on his final battle with Voldemort, Harry reveals to his opponent that the latter's plan to be immortal has failed, bragging about how he, Harry, is to defeat him. Harry risks further angering Voldemort which might have resulted in the latter getting more violent than he already is (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 603-608).

Harry and his friends find themselves trapped in a state of fight and flight during their search for Sirius at the ministry. Harry does not want to give the death eaters the prophecy that he holds and which seems to include important information about the destiny he and Voldemort share. Harry will not surrender the prophecy because he feels he needs to know what it says. Thus, he is willing to take a massive risk when he thinks it is worth it (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 719-742).

Harry is ready to trust others, knowing that this trust might probably cause troubles. He trusts Kreacher, the house elf, to help him get necessary information about his search for the Horcruxes (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 160). Kreacher has not been in good terms with Harry or his godfather, as will be discussed later in this paper. Thus, it is a risky move for Harry to trust him. Similarly, Harry allows Griphook, the goblin, to guide him and his friends into the Gringotts bank, although Harry does not know him very well. The three friends and the goblin set a deal according to which Griphook gets to keep the Gryffindor sword. Eventually, Griphook turns out to be lying to the three friends, leaving them to face a deadly fate at the bank (pp. 414, 423-442).

Among the three characters in the paper, Hermione is the one who abides by rules the most. Hermione's respect for rules is due to her desire to be respected by elders and authority figures. Not less important to her is people's safety that may be jeopardized when rules are violated.

Hermione has a great respect for rules that she urges her friends and colleagues to do the same, as well, especially if their disrespect to these rules might bring an undesirable consequence for her, too. Hermione regards her academic future highly and is always a good student. Thus, she warns Harry not to fly after Malfoy who steals Neville's ball because it is not allowed and it is too dangerous. She expresses her objection that "[Harry will] get [them] all in trouble". This might suggest that Hermione's major reason for objection here is her fear for being punished (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 158). Likewise, she tries to stop both Harry and Ron from sneaking out to have a duel against Malfoy and his friend. Trying to stop them, she reminds them that they would cause the Gryffindor House to lose points (p. 165).

On the other hand, Hermione urges others to follow the rules because she wants them to be safe. As Andrade suggests, Hermione depends on her logic and intelligence, in contrast to Harry, who can act impulsively sometimes (4). This is observed as Hermione asks Harry not to go to Hogsmead on their third year at school because it is said to be too dangerous for him at this time (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 152). She advises him to hand in the Marauder's map to Professor McGonagall for the same reason and also because it is against the school rules to have such a map. Having the map, thus, might cause Harry himself trouble (p. 209). This time, Hermione's warning is not for some personal gain; it is for a friend's safety. Similarly, she urges Harry not to waste more time without trying to figure out the riddle in the second task during the Triwizard Championship (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: p. 331). She also advises Harry not to get too attached to the potions book he has found, whose original author is unknown (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 199-201).

Hermione also stops others from risky behaviors and reactions for their own good. As Harry, Ron and Hermione meet Harry's godfather, Sirius Black, for the first time, the latter is falsely accused of helping Voldemort kill Harry's parents. At that moment, Harry is exceptionally furious that he speaks angrily to the man who is believed to be a notorious mass murderer. Hermione, then, afraid that Harry might bring harm upon himself, whispers to him to be quiet:

"Why's that?" Harry spat, trying to wrench himself free of Ron, and Hermione. "Didn't care last time, did you? Didn't mind slaughtering all those Muggles to get at Pettigrew... What's the matter, gone soft in Azkaban?"

"Harry!" Hermione whimpered. "Be quiet!" (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 361).

She reacts similarly when Harry objects to Umbridge punishing Hermione for disagreeing with her. Hermione tells Harry to stay out of this, knowing that Umbridge has already severely punished him before for speaking up (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 294). Hermione does the same role for Ron. She reminds him of the consequences of hasty actions and tries to stop him from performing them. Watching the execution of Hagrid's bird Buckbeak with Harry

and Hermione, Ron is very angry that he is about to go out of his hiding to stop the execution. It is Hermione who stands up to him at the right moment. She reminds him that if he is to do something against the ministry, like challenging its order of having Buckbeak executed, his father, who is working at the ministry, might face troubles at work (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 341).

Rowling uses certain adjectives to describe Hermione's reactions. Words like "shriek", "wail", or "whimper" are used with Hermione, but not with her male friends. The employment of such descriptions with a female character further supports the stereotype of women being hysterical (Dresang, 2003: p. 223). This is because these adjectives connote losing control over one's reactions in times of danger. However, Hermione is not always afraid of tough situations. She does challenge rules herself, and takes risks when necessary, showing no or little fear, especially as she grows up. Before Buckbeak's execution, Hermione grabs the invisibility cloak for Harry so that he can be with Hagrid to comfort him before his bird is killed. Although it is against the school rules to be out of the castle after sunset, Hermione helps Harry to break this rule because she thinks being with Hagrid at this time is important (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 346-347).

In addition, Hermione is rarely hesitant to break rules or take risks when her life or her friends' are in danger. Hermione disarms Professor Snape to stop him from attacking Harry, Sirius or Professor Lupin. She still feels guilty for doing that, though: "Oh, we're going to be in so much trouble" (pp. 383-384). She previously attacks Snape during one of Harry's Quidditch matches, believing that Snape is jinxing her friend playing on the field (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: pp. 204-205). She volunteers, among others, to adopt Harry's appearance. This is to confuse the death eaters so that they cannot tell who the real Harry is when they find seven different Potters flying at the same time. This is a suicidal mission because Hermione, or any of the other volunteers, might get killed or, at least, injured (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007, pp. 33-48).

Furthermore, when mysterious attacks take place against students and staff at Hogwarts, Hermione comes up with the idea of preparing the Polyjuice to find more information about who might be behind the attacks. To prepare the potion, she needs to break a number of rules including using herbs and books which students do not have access to, getting hairs out of other students without their consent, and adopting these students' identities (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: pp. 162-164, 186). According to Andrade, Hermione realizes that violating rules is preferable to standing still while people are in danger (p. 5). Similarly, the three friends, Harry, Ron, and Hermione, especially Harry, suspect that Malfoy is plotting something evil. Hermione takes the risk of following Malfoy in dark dungeons and spies on him with Harry and Ron (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: p. 106).

All of the three friends are almost equally not afraid to step up and take risks that would lead them to defeat evil and to protect themselves and their loved ones. Starting from year one, they manage to keep the Philosopher's Stone out of Voldemort's reach, going through numerous challenges in the process (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: pp. 297-309). They later subject themselves to danger trying to solve the mystery behind the Chamber of Secrets; Hermione is petrified by the basilisk snake, and Harry and Ron face an attack by Professor

Lockhart. Harry also faces Voldemort and the basilisk snake inside the chamber to save Ginny who is captured by Voldemort (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: pp. 318-342). The three friends also go out of their way to catch the man who allegedly betrayed Harry's parents. Doing so, Ron ends up breaking his own leg while Harry and Hermione face a werewolf and the dementors (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 354-404).

As Voldemort finally restores his powers and things become more dangerous for everyone, especially for Harry and those close to him, the three friends become even more willing to fight back against evil. They all get into the ministry to free Harry's godfather where they have to fight a group of powerful death eaters (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 706-742). When Harry decides to go find Voldemort's soul vessels, Ron and Hermione accompany him without hesitation. Eventually, they end up being captured by some death eaters, enduring cold and hunger in the forest, and putting up with the constant fear of having their families killed or tortured for revenge or information. The three friends plot to get into the ministry which is now fully controlled by the death eaters, and they find their way into highly secured vaults inside the bank, where they are almost killed by a dragon (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 423-442).

To conclude, the previous analysis indicates that the three characters all have similar tendency to put themselves at risk. Nonetheless, Harry and Ron, the male characters, may be more eager to violate rules for unnecessary, non-compelling reasons like satisfying their egos. The female character, Hermione, on the other hand, only challenges rules and takes risks when it is a must to do so.

#### **4. Nurture and Compassion**

All of the three characters to be involved in this discussion are empathic and caring to some degree. They all fear for their loved ones, and they all pay a good amount of effort to support their friends and family. However, some of them are depicted as more tender and compassionate than the rest. In this part of the paper, the aim is to bring into focus the depiction of the traditionally feminine traits of nurture, care and empathy, and whether or not there is a tendency by the author to support the gender stereotype around such personality traits.

Harry has the burden of saving himself and the world from Voldemort. Thus, Harry needs compassion and encouragement along the way of his continuous struggle. However, Harry himself is also thoughtful and considerate. The following is an attempt to pinpoint Harry's display of empathic, sympathetic and humane behaviors.

Harry is empathic to a considerable level. He is afraid of causing people worry or distress. Once he tells his godfather, Sirius Black, about his scar pain, the latter decides to come to see him. Sirius, who is a fugitive, might be in danger if he does. Harry, then, feels guilty for risking Sirius's life (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 190-191). Similarly, Harry experiences feelings of guilt when Hagrid expresses his trust and confidence that Harry would win the Triwizard Championship. Harry, who is clueless regarding how to overcome the challenging task ahead, feels guilty because he realizes he might let Hagrid down if he does not win (p. 385).

Harry shows sympathy to other creatures, as well as humans. Before finding out that he is a wizard, Harry visits the zoo with his aunt's family. He feels sorry for the snake that is

locked up behind a glass cage, and which is far away from his natural habitat (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997, pp. 29-30). The snake's condition in that situation may serve as a symbol for Harry's life before going to Hogwarts. Harry, too, lives where he does not belong, and is not loved or treated normally by his aunt's family. Thus, it seems that Harry's circumstances as an underappreciated child contributes to his compassion and understanding of similar struggles.

Other than the snake in the zoo, Dobby, the house elf, is a strong example of Harry's kindness to non-human creatures. More than once, Harry stops Dobby from hurting himself. Besides, Harry frees Dobby from slavery (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: pp. 14, 17, 356). Dobby causes Harry a number of troubles, one of which is life-threatening, to stop him from going back to Hogwarts where it is dangerous for Harry to be. Harry, though furious with Dobby, shows enough empathy towards him as to see beyond his actions into his motives, and to forgive him. When Dobby is killed by Bellatrix on the seventh book, Harry decides to give him "a proper burial", using his physical force only without resorting to magic (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 389).

Harry takes care of his owl, Hedwig, and feels bad about himself when he yells at it one time (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 40). Harry loses his owl during one battle with the death eaters. Though he should be moving away to save himself, Harry expresses a strong, yet impossible, urge to go back and save Hedwig, which is already dead (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 44).

During the second task in the Triwizard Competition in which each contestant is required to save a certain hostage, Harry shows exceptional care for others. He does not save only his hostage; he makes sure all of the other hostages are saved, too, either by stepping in himself, or by waiting until the other champions are there to rescue the hostages they are assigned to help. Harry, who does not have to help anyone but Ron to finish the task, is, consequently, caused some delay before he could make it to the shore. As a result, he scores less than both Cedric Diggory and Victor Krum, two of the three other contestants (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 421-428). Harry, then, is so concerned with others' safety and wellbeing, that he is willing to sacrifice his personal interest to save innocent lives.

Even as Harry fights against the death eaters who attack him and others during his transport to the Weasleys', Harry recognizes one of them, Stan Shunpike, who is under the Imperious Curse, the controlling curse. Knowing that Stan does not know what he is doing and is irresponsible for his actions, Harry refuses to stun or kill him, preferring only to disarm him (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 55). Harry, though attacked by Stan, thinks first of what is right and wrong, caring for innocent lives, even those who might put him in danger. Moreover, Harry even saves his colleague Draco Malfoy during the final battle at Hogwarts, although Malfoy is now a death eater (p. 517).

Moreover, Harry sacrifices the rest of the Felix Felicis, the luck potion he has won at the Potions class, to make sure his friends are safe. Harry sets off with Dumbledore to obtain one of the Horcruxes holding Voldemort's soul, not knowing what he is about to do or what dangers he and Dumbledore might come across. Before he goes, Harry leaves the potion with Ron, Hermione and Ginny asking them to use it if things go wrong at Hogwarts while he and Dumbledore are away (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: p. 459). Harry's choice to leave the potion with

his friends may not be understood as a total sacrifice because he already has Dumbledore, who is the headmaster and very strong wizard, by his side while his friends do not have such a privilege. However, his concern over his friends' safety shows affection and kindness. Furthermore, Harry disagrees with the idea of letting his friends and members of the Order of the Phoenix volunteer to claim his shape as they attempt to mislead the death eaters. He stresses that he refuses to put more lives in danger for his sake:

“Ah,” said Moody, “I forgot to mention the key point. Fourteen of us won’t be flying to Tonks’s parents’. There will be seven Harry Potters moving through the skies tonight, each of them with a companion, each pair heading for a different safe house.”

From inside his cloak Moody now withdrew a flask of what looked like mud. There was no need for him to say another word;

Harry understood the rest of the plan immediately.

“No!” he said loudly, his voice ringing through the kitchen. “No way!”

“I told them you’d take it like this,” said Hermione with a hint of complacency.

“If you think I’m going to let six people risk their lives — !” (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 33).

Harry, then, is reluctant to let his friends put their lives in danger for his personal matters. Similarly, when he thinks that Sirius is abducted by Voldemort, he sets off to the ministry of magic where he thinks Sirius is kept. Harry’s friends are ready to go with him to help, yet Harry rejects the idea for their safety, until they insist on going with him (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 700-702).

Harry’s compassion is further confirmed when it is compared to Ron’s. Both Harry and Ron show different reactions in relation to the Marauder’s map. The Marauder’s map allows one to see where and with whom people are without leaving your place. This special feature makes it a rather tempting magical object, playing on the human’s desire to be secure against the unknown (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 199-205). Ron is eager to use the map, rejecting Hermione’s suggestion of handing the map in to the school administration. Surrendering the map would stop him from using the map and enjoying it. Harry, too, does show his deep interest to use it. However, his interest in the map is not the sole reason why he decides to keep it. He thinks of the consequences of handing in the map which might include the punishment of Fred and George, who gave it to him. Ron, then, is only concerned with his pleasure while Harry has his mind set on others’ safety while considering keeping or sacrificing the map (p. 209).

Ron rarely shows compassion, as compared to Harry or Hermione. However, he cares for Ginny, his younger sister. Thus, he wants to protect her from getting emotionally hurt. He objects to her kissing her boyfriend (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: p. 238), and he later blames Harry for kissing Ginny because Harry has already broken up with her (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: p. 93). Although it is uncommon of him, Ron expresses fear for the safety of the house elves during the final battle (p. 510). Ron also cares for

his best friend, Harry. Ron insists on going to Harry's aunt's house to accompany Harry to the Quidditch World Cup, and he uses his father's car to save Harry from the Dursleys' house where Harry is mistreated (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 38-44; *Chamber*, 1998: pp. 24-35).

Hermione is the only female among the three friends and classmates, who are also the three major characters in the series. Hermione is very smart and is academically superior to her classmates. She cares a lot for her two friends, Harry and Ron, and she pays close attention to others' suffering and troubles. In the following section of the paper, Hermione's actions and reactions will be investigated to decide how much she conformed to the gender stereotype that girls and women are nurturing and empathic.

Hermione can stand up to her friends for their own good. As she finds out that both Harry and Ron are attempting to accept Malfoy's invitation over a duel, Hermione tries to stop them, warning them against probable consequences:

'I almost told your brother,' Hermione snapped. 'Percy – he's a Prefect, he'd put a stop to this.'

Harry couldn't believe anyone could be so interfering.

'Come on,' he said to Ron. He pushed open the portrait of the Fat Lady and climbed through the hole.

Hermione wasn't going to give up that easily. She followed Ron through the portrait hole, hissing at them like an angry goose.

'Don't you *care* about Gryffindor, do you *only* care about yourselves, I don't want Slytherin to win the House Cup and you'll lose all the points I got from Professor McGonagall for knowing about Switching Spells.'

'Go away.'

'All right, but I warned you, you just remember what I said when you're on the train home tomorrow, you're so –' (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 167).

Although she is afraid that their behavior might lead to some point deduction of Gryffindor's score, Hermione is also concerned with her friends' safety. Hermione senses danger again as Harry receives a broomstick from an anonymous sender. Although she knows that Harry will not agree to this, she reports the matter to McGonagall who confiscates the broomstick until it is examined (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 245-246). Similarly, Hermione does not let Harry and Ron copy her homework because, as she exclaims, "how will [they] learn?" (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 195).

On a similar occasion, both Harry and Ron are careless about their exams. Moreover, Harry neglects his other duty of solving the riddle of the egg in the second task of the Triwizard Championship. Hermione, who is studying hard, urges them to do something productive about these two responsibilities for their own good (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 331-332).

Hermione warns Harry not to interfere with Umbridge's unfair treatment of her, for fear that Umbridge might use this chance to punish Harry one more time (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 294). Hermione pays enough attention to Harry as to notice that he is attached to the mysterious potions book he has found, and as to warn him repeatedly against this attachment

(Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 199-201). She is also highly empathic that she can sense that Harry is being tormented with the visions that he has as a result of his connection to Voldemort (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 138, 188).

Hermione pacifies her friends when they need to, and gives them a push when necessary. She lifts up Harry's spirits, making him feel more comfortable, before he joins his first Quidditch match (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 194). She also urges him to eat before the match so that he can play (p. 197). When Harry speaks about how Voldemort killed his own parents, Hermione and Ron both give different reactions to Harry's emotional expression. Hermione, on one hand, comforts Harry using words of sympathy. Ron, on the other hand, is rather worried once Harry utters Voldemort's name since the name is traditionally feared as part of the fear of Voldemort himself (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: pp. 279-280). Thus, only the female of the two friends shows enough empathy towards their distressed friend, Harry. Moreover, she gets really worried over Harry when he faints on the Quidditch pitch during one match (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 92).

Hermione is humane and compassionate. She understands others' suffering easily and she helps those in need. Aboard the train which takes the students to Hogwarts, Neville loses his toad. He goes around asking people if they have seen it. Hermione is the only one mentioned to be accompanying Neville in his search, checking for the lost animal in different compartments (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 112). Similarly, Hermione helps Ron with his homework. Some assignment is due and Ron has not been able to do it right. Hermione offers to revise and correct Ron's homework (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 277-278).

Hermione validates others' feelings even when she does not agree with them on the best way to channel these feelings. Harry thinks that Sirius Black betrayed his parents, revealing their hiding place to Voldemort who kills them, as a result. Harry is so furious that he wants to go after Black to avenge his parents. Hermione expresses her understanding of Harry's feelings of hurt and pain over his parents' death. Yet, she advises him not to chase Black for Harry's own good (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 226).

Hermione is very empathic when it comes to other creatures' issues. As she, Harry, Ron, and Malfoy accompany Hagrid in the Forbidden Forest as part of their school punishment, they come across a dead unicorn. They realize that the unicorn has been killed. Seeing the dead creature, Hermione declares that she does not feel so well (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 267). This implies that she has delicate and tender feelings. Besides, when her cat keeps on attacking and intimidating Ron's rat, she defends her cat heartedly (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 63-64). She even sympathizes with harmful garden creatures as the Weasleys' kids handle them with some violence (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: p. 51). Hermione is particularly angry at Umbridge who attempts to belittle Hagrid's mental and linguistic abilities in public. It is one of the few times that Hermione is so angry that she whispers offensive language describing Umbridge as an: "evil hag" who is "twisted and vicious" (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 414).

Hermione's interest in other creatures' rights is most prominent as she launches a movement for protecting and demanding rights for the house-elves. She sees how much they are being treated like slaves; working hard but never appreciated by their superiors. This is preceded also by her defense of Winky, Mr. Crouch's house elf, who is wrongly accused of

sparkling the Dark Mark, and who is, consequently, fired from Mr. Crouch's service (Sultan et al., p. 235; Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 115, 154-155).

In times of distress, when everyone is normally concerned with himself/herself, Hermione shows her soft-hearted nature. The Dark Mark is sparked during the Quidditch World Cup and people run for their lives. Although she is afraid like anybody else, Hermione is concerned with the safety of others, as well as hers. Finding Harry and Ron, she expresses her wish that the Weasleys would be fine, too (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 108-109).

Although the three friends face the same difficult situation of being wanted and chased by the death eaters, and are all travelling around in tough living conditions, Hermione is taking care of her male friends. She cooks for them although there are very little tools and ingredients to help her prepare something edible. In addition, up to some point, she is able to put up with Ron's constant complaints of the lack of food and comfort, although he himself rarely does anything but nag (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 225, 232, 239). Despite all her help, Hermione is not appreciated.

Moreover, Hermione is caring and responsible even towards those whom others might reject. Kreacher, another house elf, is hated by his master, Sirius Black and, later on, by Harry and Ron. Hermione, though she is one of those people constantly insulted by the elf, invites Black to try and make amends with him (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 281). Furthermore, she praises Kreacher for getting information about what Draco Malfoy is plotting during their sixth year at school (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: p. 377). Later on, she invites Harry to treat Kreacher well and to understand his suffering. Hermione's attempts to bring peace between Harry and Kreacher, who formerly plots against Sirius, partially leading to his death, proves successful. This, in turn, makes Kreacher an ally to the good side, helping the three friends and eventually joining the battle against evil at Hogwarts (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 158-161, 601).

Though Harry is never violent or abusing to Kreacher, he was not as good to him as Hermione was before Hermione's peace attempts. Harry would stop Kreacher from hurting himself, as house elves always do when they feel guilty, yet Harry never showed other signs of care or compassion before that. Ron, on the other hand, is even less kind to Kreacher, yelling at him when the latter insults Hermione or speaks inappropriately (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: 99; *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 153-154, 158).

During their group punishment in the Forbidden Forrest, Hermione shows concern over the safety of both Malfoy and Neville. Malfoy is nasty, yet, she is worried about him being attacked or killed (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 274). Similarly, Malfoy's action causes him trouble once more. As he provokes an animal during one of Hagrid's classes, the animal attacks him. Though she admits it is Malfoy's mistake, Hermione still asks Hagrid about whether Malfoy will be alright or not. Ron, on the other hand, is first worried about Hagrid's reputation as a teacher after the accident taking place in his class. Only later on that Ron inquires about Malfoy's health (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 125, 127). This particular reaction is important in assessing Hermione's character as largely empathic. Just like Ron, she is frequently bullied by Malfoy. Malfoy targets Hermione for being born to Muggle parents (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: p. 117). However, Hermione's first thoughts about the accident are revolved around her classmate's safety.

Once more, Malfoy misbehaves and makes fun of Harry in public. Prof. Moody is there at the right moment to spot him, and he punishes Malfoy by turning him into an animal. Prof. McGonagall steps in and saves Malfoy. Hermione, though she does not like Malfoy's behaviors, is glad that McGonagall has interfered to stop this inhumane measure taken by Moody (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: p. 174). Other than Malfoy, a death eater is accidentally turned into a creature with a baby's head and a man's body. Harry is about to strike him, yet Hermione forbids him to do so because it is not ethical to attack a child (Sultan et al., 235; Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 728).

## 5. Rudeness

Harry, Ron and Hermione all exhibit different levels of rudeness. This part deals with two kinds of expressions of rudeness adopted by the three characters. Their use of curses and raising their voices, especially to elders, will be the focus of this part.

Being agitated with Peeves, a school ghost, Harry curses him. This only happens when Peeves has woken Harry up, shocked, with his loud, annoying voice. Harry rarely curses and this particular instance of using swear words only happens when he is half asleep, which means he is in a condition characterized by lack of responsibility over one's actions (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 182). Both Harry and Ron are rude when they speak of Professor Trelawney (pp. 302-303). They also get angry with, Rufus Scrimgeour, the minister of magic, raising their voices at him as he tries to question them about the reasons why Dumbledore has left them certain tools as part of his will (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 103-104).

Harry does not mind using inappropriate descriptions to talk about the people he hates. He once calls the journalist Rita Skeeter a "cow" for writing an article with false information about him (Rowling, *Goblet*, 2000: pp. 379, 382). When put under a lot of pressure, Harry can unleash his anger and frustration over other people. He is upset as his friends have not contacted him for the whole summer following Voldemort's return. Feeling agitated, he makes fun of his cousin, Dudley, provoking him into a fight (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 11-14). When Harry finally meets his friends, he experiences a number of rage episodes, yelling at his friends for having ignored him during the summer (pp. 61-62, 68). Harry calls Professor Lupin, who is also Harry's father's best friend, a "coward" because Lupin is ready to leave his newborn baby behind to go fight with Harry against Voldemort (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 172-173).

On the other hand, when Ron cannot deal with his own problems, he might channel his failure into angry yells at weaker people. Ron and his younger sister Ginny fight with each other as Ron tries to scold her for kissing her boyfriend. As Ginny stands up to him, Ron walks away shouting at a younger student in his way (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 240-241). Ron also uses rude language shamelessly in the presence of his family (Rowling, *Hallows*, 2007: pp. 73, 81). He curses when he is not happy with what is happening around him, like when Hermione secretly places hats for the house elves to find (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 236). Besides, he uses rude language when someone he cares for is underappreciated. For example, he responds aggressively to Luna's remark about Hagrid: "Well, we think he's a bit of a joke in Ravenclaw," said Luna, unfazed. "You've got a rubbish sense of humor then," Ron snapped, as the wheels below them creaked into motion" (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 185).

Hermione rarely crosses the line with her elders. She is rarely found cursing or yelling at others. However, she is once rude and disobedient to Professor Trelawney (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 316-318). On another occasion, she calls Professor Umbridge an “old hag” under her breath (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 414).

Based on the previous analysis, Harry’s display of rudeness usually takes the form of raising his voice to elders, and yelling and shouting at people when he is angry or disappointed. He rarely curses, as compared to Ron, who usually uses inappropriate words when overwhelmed by anger or fear. On the other hand, Ron does not raise his voice to elders as much as Harry does. Hermione, compared to the two male friends, is the least to yell or raise her voice to elders, and is the least to curse, as well. This sphere of the three friends’ behaviors and attitudes highly conforms to gender norms. Harry and Ron are more prone to show rudeness in the form of cursing or raising their voices to others, while Hermione rarely loses her temper in similar ways. Thus, the two male characters act rudely more frequently than the female character.

## **6. Persistence and Insistence**

Harry, Ron and Hermione, are to be evaluated according to how much they are willing to follow others’ advice. They are also to be judged according to how far they are ready to go to prove their point of view or to achieve a certain goal. All of them have fought evil with similar resilience, bearing the burden of saving the magical world from Voldemort and his lot. Yet, there are times when each of them has his/her own battles.

Harry is hard-headed and does not care much about consequences when he has a strong desire to do something (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 228). On his sixth year at school, Harry has been suspecting that Malfoy has joined the death eaters and that he is doing a confidential job for Voldemort. Harry does not listen to his friends trying to convince him to let go of this assumption, and he goes on watching Malfoy to try to figure out his secret (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: pp. 267-270, 319, 450-452). On a different occasion, Harry is very determined to achieve victory over Malfoy who challenges him to a duel, even though accepting this challenge may bring about undesirable results. Harry would not accept Hermione’s logical warnings against his attempts, although he knows that he might get caught for violating school rules (Rowling, *Philosopher*, 1997: p. 237). He refuses to bend to Professor Umbridge’s will, insisting on speaking out the truth that Voldemort is back, despite her warnings to him (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 226-228).

Harry, then, is willing to take the risk of angering people of authority when he is convinced it is inevitable. He insists on asking Professor Snape about the contents of the department of mysteries at the ministry of magic. Though he realizes that Snape loathes him and that he is not supposed to know too much information at that time, Harry is not scared of Snape who appears tough and angry, and he still insists on getting an answer out of him (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: p. 496).

Harry’s sense of responsibility contributes to his tendency to insist on what he wants. Harry goes to Professor Lupin for advice on how to handle the dementors’ attack. He was offered a training on the Patronus charm to push the dementors away. During the tough training,

Harry faints for a number of times. Nonetheless, he insists on completing the training justifying his attitude by his concern over his team's loss, rather than his fear over his own safety:

"I do!" said Harry fiercely, stuffing the rest of the Chocolate Frog into his mouth. "I've got to! What if the Dementors turn up at our match against Ravenclaw? I can't afford to fall off again. If we lose this game, we've lost the Quidditch Cup!" (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: p. 253).

Ron does not give up easily and his performance as a Quidditch player supports this assumption. Ron starts training to get into Gryffindor Quidditch team on his fifth year. He faces bullying by opponent players like Malfoy, and is underappreciated by his brothers, Fred and George (Rowling, *Order*, 2003: pp. 269-270, 374, 377-380). Despite all the pressure against him, Ron perseveres and finally becomes the Gryffindor guard, achieving victory for his team on his sixth year (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: p. 444).

Hermione is strong-willed and determined. She insists on what she wants and gets it done (Rowling, *Chamber*, 1998: p. 226). Amid the fear that has spread among the students post the attacks against their colleagues on the second book, Hermione is the one to speak up and demand more information on the Chamber of Secrets. She interrupts the history professor, asking him to narrate the history of the chamber:

"Granger, Professor. I was wondering if you could tell us anything about the Chamber of Secrets," said Hermione in a clear voice.

Dean Thomas, who had been sitting with his mouth hanging open, gazing out of the window, jerked out of his trance; Lavender Brown's head came up off her arms and Neville Longbottom's elbow slipped off his desk. (p. 157).

Although she is very decent with her teachers, she is found opposing them in public at times, refusing to accept things that do not sound right to her. She rejects Professor Trelawney's predictions, and the whole subject of Divination altogether because she does not believe it is to be trusted. Later, Hermione disagrees with Professor Umbridge on an academic matter which makes Umbridge punish her by deducting points of Hermione's school house (Rowling, *Azkaban*, 1999: pp. 111-112; *Order*, 2003: pp. 293-294). When it comes to her studies, Hermione is exceptionally hard-working that she does well during her time as a student at Hogwarts, becoming the best in her class, as Harry calls her (Rowling, *Prince*, 2005: p. 59). This shows how strong-willed she is, knowing that she also chooses to bear the responsibility of helping Harry, thus, supporting good against evil in general.

Harry, Ron and Hermione are persistent in tough situations. They do not surrender easily and they put a lot of effort until a specific mission is done. Thus, it seems that the three characters, male and female, are depicted almost equally in terms of their tendency to persevere and insist on what they believe to be right.

## **7. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the three characters manifest remarkable disparity in some of the personality traits considered, while they demonstrate similarity in some others. First, they all violate rules and take risks. Harry and Ron easily challenge school regulations even when it is not obligatory

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for them to act as such. Hermione, on the other hand, struggles at first with defying orders. Yet, when she finally becomes less rigid about rules, it is for compelling reasons. All of them are ready to put themselves at risk for the sake of good and the protection of the innocent. Second, though the three of them are all good people, only Harry's and Hermione's acts of kindness are highlighted in the series. Third, Harry and Ron are much more prone to be rude to others than Hermione. They quickly give in to anger, rarely controlling such an emotion. Finally, the three friends have the tendency to persist and persevere to similar extents in different activities.

Thus, the first and second points examined imply the author's uncertainty in her attitude towards gender stereotypes. The two male characters' attitudes towards risk-taking and rule-breaking fit the gender constructs that encourage boys and men to be as fearless and aggressive as they could be. Hermione challenges the norms in this respect, especially as she grows up, becoming bolder and taking more initiatives than the norms dictate for girls and women. However, she is jumpier and more careful when dealing with dangers than the two male characters. When it comes to the second point, Harry and Hermione are very kind to others, appreciating others' needs, and being largely compassionate with the weak. Ron, the other male character, is also considerate at times, and he cares for his loved ones. Thus, the only female character of the three serves the stereotypes to a considerable deal. One of the male characters, Harry, does not fit in the stereotypical male image, as he can be almost as caring and nurturing as Hermione. This, in turn, suggests partial rejection to the stereotypes.

The third point reveals that the author adheres to gender stereotypes in her depiction of the characters. The male characters are rude, as they use either verbal or nonverbal aggression. The female character of the three rarely resorts to either kinds of aggression.

The final point suggests that the author rejects gender stereotypes in her portrayal of the three characters. The three characters all display close levels of persistence and insistence. Since the male characters would be more expected to persevere and be hard-minded, this can be another example of how the gender representation in the novels does not serve gender stereotypes. All in all, the analysis of some personality traits or attitudes of the three major characters suggests that gender stereotypes are partially challenged, yet partially respected. In other words, the selected personality traits in this paper are not entirely based on traditional gender expectations, but they are, nonetheless, effected by such expectations to a remarkable degree.

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