

# Harry Potter and the Deathly Donald

Diana C. Mutz, *University of Pennsylvania*

## ABSTRACT

Few empirical studies suggest that fictional stories can influence political opinions. Nonetheless, in this study I demonstrate the relevance of Harry Potter consumption to oppositional attitudes toward Donald Trump and his worldview. Using multivariate observational models and panel data from 2014 to 2016, results suggest that the lessons of the Harry Potter series have influenced levels of opposition to punitive policies and support for tolerance of groups considered outside the American mainstream. Further, they predict public reactions to Donald Trump above and beyond their influence on policies consistent with his views.

Similarities between Donald Trump and Harry Potter's nemesis, Lord Voldemort, have not gone without notice during the 2016 campaign (e.g., Hartmann 2016, Schneck 2016). Such comparisons could amount to little more than poking fun at a political opponent. More recently, however, even Trump supporters seem to be buying into the analogy, purchasing Trump posters featuring their candidate in front of an American flag as backdrop, with a quote from the Dark Lord himself: "There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it" (Rowling 1997, 211; see also Farah 2016; Isaac 2016).

In this study, I evaluate the relevance of Harry Potter consumption—both reading Harry Potter books and viewing Harry Potter movies—to attitudes toward Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee for president in 2016. If Trump is analogous to Voldemort—indeed, some have begun using the term "Trumpdemort" (see [www.redbubble.com](http://www.redbubble.com))—then one would expect Harry Potter readers and viewers to be more likely to oppose Trump and his policies.

## CAN FICTIONAL STORIES INFLUENCE REAL WORLD OPINIONS?

The influence of the tremendously popular Harry Potter series has been compared to that of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a book that was widely credited with "galvanizing public opinion against slavery" (Strange 2002: 263; see also *Time* 2007). But then, as now, there is sparse evidence from empirical research that fictional stories, even extremely popular ones, influence political opinion.

Political leaders in the United States often express concerns about how fictional television programming may influence mass opinion (e.g., "Dan Quayle" 1992). For example, Republican vice-presidential candidate Mike Pence once called Disney's "Mulan" liberal propaganda, arguing that it would change

people's opinions on women in combat positions (Shabad 2016). Despite frequent claims about fiction's potential to change real world opinion, research on media effects has been focused on the influence of non-fiction programming. Only a handful of studies have examined whether fiction is capable of influencing political attitudes by virtue of the lessons taught in their plotlines. When stories feature clear protagonists with whom audience members identify, this mechanism is hypothesized to facilitate attitude change. But such findings have been far from consistent. Many studies have not produced the anticipated attitudinal change (e.g., Sigelman & Sigelman 1974; Feldman & Sigelman 1985; Holbert et al. 2003; Holbert, Shah and Kwak 2003; 2004). Others have demonstrated significant influence on public attitudes (French and van Hoorn 1986; Lenart and McGraw 1989; Mutz and Nir 2010).

In almost all of these studies, experimental designs have been used to assess the impact of a story on its audience. Experiments are the method of choice for two main reasons. First, random assignment to treatment naturally makes causal inference easier. In addition, few fictional stories have had large enough audiences to register a significant impact in observational studies. Even stories that produce a strong impact on the political preferences in a laboratory setting may register little overall impact on the public at large.

In this respect, the Harry Potter series may be different from most stories. Few fictional stories have become quite the cultural phenomenon that Harry Potter has. The books have sold more than 450 million copies worldwide, making it the best-selling book series in history, and making their author the first ever billionaire author (Watson 2004). In the United States, nine thousand FedEx trucks were used to deliver the initial release of *The Goblet of Fire* alone (Fierman 2005). The last four books were the fastest-selling books in history, with the final book selling roughly eleven million copies in the United States within 24 hours of its release (New York Times 2007). So unprecedented is Harry Potter's popularity that the word *muggle*, referring to a person without magical powers, has made it into the Oxford English Dictionary (McCaffrey 2003).

**Diane C. Mutz** is professor of political science and communication and director of the Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics at the University of Pennsylvania. She may be reached at [mutz@upenn.edu](mailto:mutz@upenn.edu).

## THE POLITICS OF HARRY POTTER

The political messages of this wildly popular series have been hotly debated by literary critics. It has been attacked by both conservatives and liberals alike. For example, a review in the liberal *Guardian* described it as conservative and paternalistic (Adams 2003). Other critics from the Left faulted it for being sexist, with patriarchal stereotypes and adherence to “the conventional assumption that men do and should run the world” (Schoefer 2000). Still others critiqued it for promoting free market values and a “culture of competition” (Yokaris 2004).

Conservatives, meanwhile, have criticized the books and movies for promoting a liberal political agenda. As one critic put it, the stories “are, in fact, a ferocious critique of consumer society and the world of free enterprise” (Lichfield 2004). When author J.K. Rowling suggested that Albus Dumbledore was gay, Bill O’Reilly asked if it was part of a “gay agenda” to indoctrinate children (*Associated Press* 2007): “By dubbing someone so respected, so talented and so kind, as someone who just happens to be also

*Despite differing perceptions of the books’ prevailing ideology, there is a consensus surrounding at least three themes. These include 1) the value of tolerance and respect for difference; 2) opposition to violence and punitiveness; and 3) the dangers of authoritarianism.*

homosexual, she’s reinforcing the idea that a person’s gayness is not something of which they should be ashamed.” Although author J.K. Rowling denies having had a specific political agenda, as she further explained, “I wanted Harry to leave our world and find ... the same problems in the wizarding world... hierarchy... bigotry, and this notion of purity...crops up all over the world.”

Despite differing perceptions of the books’ prevailing ideology, there is a consensus surrounding at least three themes. These include 1) the value of tolerance and respect for difference; 2) opposition to violence and punitiveness; and 3) the dangers of authoritarianism. These same three themes are prominent in coverage of Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign. Because Trump’s political views are widely viewed as opposed to the values espoused in the Harry Potter series, exposure to the Potter series may play an influential role in affecting how Americans respond to Donald Trump.

### Tolerance of Difference

As Gerson (2007) and others have noted, “Tolerance is one of the main themes of the Harry Potter books.” The protagonists are quite mindful of discriminatory practices and the need to protect those vulnerable to unequal treatment. For example, Hermione forms a “Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare” to improve life for oppressed house-elves (Donahue 2001; see also Hitchens 2007). Likewise, Harry frees the house-elf, Dobby, from enslavement by Lucius Malfoy, a decision that later helps him win the battle of good over evil. Further, Harry is himself mixed “race” with a father who was a wizard and a mother born to muggle parents. When Potter’s young son expresses prejudice against Slytherin, the house of many of Harry’s opponents, he is quickly reprimanded by his father who tells him that the bravest man he ever knew was a Slytherin.

The ongoing battle between good, as personified by Harry and his friends, and evil, as personified by Lord Voldemort, is at root

about the importance of group purity. Lord Voldemort supports the eradication of mixed-blood wizards (so called “half-bloods”) as well as muggles (non-wizards), mudbloods (muggle-born wizards) and squibs (wizard-born non-wizards). During Voldemort’s time in power, people live in constant fear that they will be killed, either for having impure blood or for sympathizing with those who do. In Harry’s world, “werewolves were subject to discrimination as if they had AIDS” (Gerson 2007).

In comparison, Donald Trump has called for a temporary moratorium on Muslim immigration.<sup>1</sup> Further, Trump falsely claimed that American Muslims in New Jersey celebrated the attacks on September 11, 2001 (Kessler 2015), and has suggested establishing a national database to register all Muslims (Hillyard 2015).

Muslims are not alone in incurring Trump’s wrath. Trump has on several occasions stereotyped and insulted women, those with disabilities, and Asians, who according to his statement at an event in Iowa, dispense with introductory pleasantries to say, “We want deal!” He also has offended Mexicans and immigrants

by describing those crossing the United States’ southern border as “rapists.” Trump attacked federal Judge Gonzalo Curiel, the judge presiding over a lawsuit against Trump University, for having Mexican ancestry. So common are his degrading comments about outgroups that websites have become devoted to keeping long lists of them.<sup>2</sup>

### Opposition to Punitive Policies

The Harry Potter series also promotes non-violent means of conflict resolution. Although the stories themselves include plenty of violence and even death, these actions are perpetrated strictly by those on the side of evil: “Using violence freely and indiscriminately is a characteristic of bad people” (Gierzynski 2013, 21). The wizard protagonists also avoid the use of curses for killing, for torture, and for the ability to control another. In contrast, Voldemort is willing to kill many times in order to split his soul into seven horcruxes and attain immortality; the ends justify the means. Harry Potter, on the other hand, refuses to kill, even in his final battle with Voldemort. Instead, Potter resorts to disarming his enemies as his major means of protection.

Donald Trump again aligns more with Voldemort than Potter, suggesting that “torture works” and that if elected president he will bring back waterboarding, which he has dubbed a “minimal form of torture.” As one headline put it, “Donald Trump is running to be America’s next top torture president.”<sup>3</sup> He has even advocated killing the families of terrorists as a means of deterrence.

Trump’s campaign also has become associated with violence. Although Trump himself says this is merely a “media fabrication,”<sup>4</sup> he has praised his supporters’ acts of violence against protesters at his rallies. Trump has made public comments encouraging his supporters and security personnel to punch, eject and “knock the crap” out of protesters, whom he views as “bad dudes.”

### Anti-authoritarianism

The protagonists in Harry Potter are united in their opposition to authoritarian characters in the novels. Of course, the most prominent authoritarian in these stories is Voldemort. Readers have long noted similarities between Voldemort and Hitler, and Rowling herself has acknowledged these parallels. Likewise, Trump's fascist leanings have not gone unnoticed (see Chotiner 2016; Frank 2016; Kagan 2016). Consistent with authoritarian principles, he promises order as well as dominance over all potential threats. As does Voldemort, Trump portrays himself as a strongman who can bend others to his will, be they the Chinese government or terrorists. His open admiration for Vladimir Putin—"at least he's a leader"—caused Joe Scarborough to point out that many of Putin's opponents end up dead (Gass 2015).

### RESEARCH TO DATE

Research on the Harry Potter series is limited. To date, only one empirical study has examined hypotheses about its political impact. Based on a convenience sample of over 1,100 undergraduate students from seven universities, Gierzynski (2013) argues that Potter fans are more tolerant than non-fans; further, Potter fans are systematically more positive in their attitudes toward outgroups such as Muslims and gays, and significantly more supportive of government efforts to promote equality. These relationships persist even after controlling for authoritarianism, although other potentially important factors, such as eventual educational attainment, were not taken into account. Even more important, political ideology and party predispositions were not taken into account. And although controlling for authoritarianism certainly makes causality more plausible, the modified authoritarianism scale used in this student study has not yet been validated.

Gierzynski (2013) also finds that college student Potter fans report less authoritarian views, although this may result from the fact that they are more liberal, a characteristic that is not included in the model. The most convincing analysis shows that Potter fans are less supportive of punitive policies after controlling for ideology. Whether these relationships persist in surveys other than this convenience sample of college students and in the presence of more rigorous controls remains to be seen. In this study, I use representative national panel data collected between 2014 and 2016 to test these hypotheses in the broader context of the American adult population. Further, by including more fully specified models, I provide more exacting tests of three hypotheses consistent with this theory:

*H1: The more Harry Potter books read or movies seen, the greater the respondent's acceptance of diversity and difference.*

*H2: The more Harry Potter books read or movies seen, the less supportive respondents will be of punitive policies such as killing terrorists, torturing people suspected of terrorism, and using the death penalty.*

*H3: The more Harry Potter books read or movies seen, the less supportive Americans will be of Donald Trump.*

A fourth and final hypothesis concerns the relative impact of reading Harry Potter books to viewing the movies. This comparison is complicated by the fact that it is not only the medium that changes. In order to accommodate the usual length of feature films, not everything in the books could be included in the movies. In addition, visual details provided in the movies could not be

specified as concretely through prose. As a result, audio-visual media and print rarely, if ever, convey precisely the same information. The movies are particularly likely to emphasize action scenes over perspective on the characters' internal dilemmas; introspection rarely provides good visuals.

In studies of the American news media, print has long been viewed as more effective than television in encouraging political learning due to its structural characteristics. Exposure to television can occur with very low levels of attention to the content, and thus low levels of learning. Consuming print, on the other hand, automatically demands high levels of attention, so it is not surprising that those who consume a story via print tend to learn and remember more (Neuman 1974; Culbertson and Stempel 1986; Mondak 1995; Chaffee and Frank 1996; Chaffee and Kanihan 1997). For both of these reasons—content differences as well as the means of consumption—I predict stronger effects from print than from movies.

*H4: To the extent that exposure to the Harry Potter story carries political influence, reading the Harry Potter books will produce more impact than viewing the movies.*

### RESEARCH METHODS

Representative national probability surveys collected by GfK Research provide the raw material for this analysis. A total of 1,142 respondents completed both waves of the survey relevant to this study. To measure the two independent variables, a survey administered in 2014 asked all respondents about their extent of exposure to the Harry Potter story through either books or movies (see online appendix). Each person's scores were summed.

More people have seen Harry Potter movies than have read Harry Potter books. As shown in the left panel of figure 1, exposure is higher among younger respondents for both movies and books. As shown in the right panel of figure 1, book readership is less likely to reflect pre-existing partisan views. There is no discernible association between party identification and being more or less likely to have read the Harry Potter books. But when it comes to viewing movies, Republicans are systematically less likely to have seen the Harry Potter movies. This is perhaps due to greater awareness of content in the series that some Republicans oppose, such as violence and witchcraft. But it is also true that Republicans view fewer movies in general than Democrats (Franklin 2006).

There are three dependent variables in this study. To parallel the major themes in Harry Potter with the potential to influence reactions to Trump's candidacy, measures tapped tolerance of outgroups, opposition to punitive policies, and a general feelings toward Trump. To tap tolerance of diverse others, feeling thermometer ratings were assessed for attitudes toward Muslims and homosexuals. An index of punitive policy preferences was created by taking the mean level of opposition to three punitive policies: 1) the use of torture to extract information, 2) killing terrorists, and 3) supporting the death penalty. As a measure of attitudes toward Trump, the 2016 wave of this panel survey included a feeling thermometer asking all respondents to rate their feelings toward him on a 0 to 100 scale (see online appendix for details).

Observational data are limited in the strength of causal arguments that can be made. Nonetheless, because the goal of these analyses is to examine these hypotheses as causal theories, I include control variables in all models in order to take into account

potentially spurious causes of both Trump support and exposure to Harry Potter. All models included gender (females were expected to rate Trump poorly), education (expected to negatively predict Trump support), age (expected to positively predict Trump support), and evangelical self-identification (expected to discourage both tolerance of Muslims and gays, and consuming stories about wizards). Two dummy variables accounted for party identification, and ideology was measured on the usual seven-point scale.

Although these variables cover the most obvious sources of potentially spurious relationships, they do not tap personality traits that might drive support for Trump as well as reluctance

Five patterns are clear in all models. First, age has a consistently negative impact on evaluations of these two outgroups. Second, education has a consistently positive effect on appraisals of Muslims and gays. Third, women are consistently more tolerant than men are when it comes to evaluating these groups. Fourth, conservative ideology consistently predicts more negative attitudes toward these groups. Finally, social dominance has a strong negative impact on how people feel about these outgroups.

However, beyond these patterns, does Harry Potter make any difference? As shown in the first row of model 1 and model 3,

*To parallel the major themes in Harry Potter with the potential to influence reactions to Trump's candidacy, measures tapped tolerance of outgroups, opposition to punitive policies, and a general feelings toward Trump.*

to read books or see movies in general, or reluctance to read the Harry Potter series in particular. Toward that end, I incorporated a scale tapping social dominance orientation, a personality trait that taps differences in an individual's preference for hierarchy and the domination over lower-status groups by high status groups. Social dominance orientation is a personality trait predisposing an individual toward anti-egalitarianism. People high in social dominance are power seekers who, like Trump and Voldemort, are driven to "Win! Win! Win!"<sup>5</sup> and dominate others (see Altemeyer 2006). Not surprisingly, social dominance has a strong positive relationship with both authoritarianism and racism (see Pratto et al. 2012).

## RESULTS

To what extent has exposure to the Harry Potter saga conditioned public reactions to Donald Trump? At the time survey data on exposure to Harry Potter's story were collected, Donald Trump was known only as a reality TV star. However, in 2016, these same panelists were asked about their views of Donald Trump the candidate.

In table 1 I examine the relationship between feelings about two outgroups and exposure to Harry Potter's legacy of tolerance.

each Potter book read raises evaluations of Muslims and homosexuals by 1–2 points on the feeling thermometer scale. This impact on tolerance is small, but statistically significant in both cases. Viewing Harry Potter movies, on the other hand, appears to influence attitudes toward gays, but not Muslims.

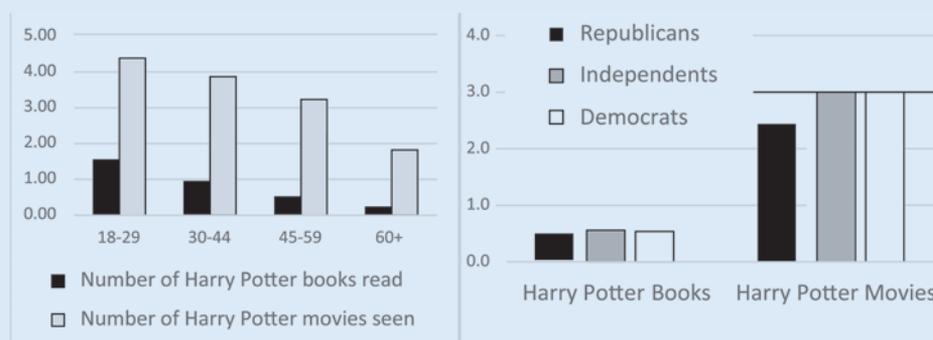
In table 2, I examine the relationship between Potter exposure and the index tapping opposition to punitive policies. Here again, reading the Harry Potter stories appears to encourage opposition to punitive policies, although the effect size is relatively small. Movies, on the other hand, do not demonstrate a significant relationship with opposition to punitive policies.

In table 3, I examine the extent to which Harry Potter exposure produces the hypothesized negative attitudes toward Donald Trump. Here again, the same patterns documented in various national polls are in evidence; Trump's support is drawn primarily from poorly educated, conservative Republican males. In addition, those with high levels of social dominance orientation appear to be drawn to Trump's "take no prisoners" style. But beyond these influences, reading Harry Potter books encourages more negative attitudes toward Trump. Each book that a person has read lowers their evaluation of Donald Trump by roughly 2–3 points. Although the size of this effect may seem small, to put it in perspective, it is on par with the impact of party identification on attitudes toward gays and Muslims. When one considers that a given respondent may have read as many as seven Harry Potter books, then the total impact on evaluations of Trump could be as much as 18 units lower on the feeling thermometer. As shown in model 2, consistent with tables 1 and 2, there is no evidence of impact of from movie viewing.

Finally, in models 3 and 4 of table 3, I examine whether if one takes the relationship between Harry Potter exposure and policy

Figure 1

### Harry Potter Book Readers and Movie Viewers, by Age and Party Identification



Analysis of variance demonstrated significant differences by age in both reading Harry Potter books and seeing Harry Potter movies. When broken down by party identification, there were no significant differences in the extent of book reading by party. Movie viewing was significantly lower among Republicans.

attitudes into account, does reading Harry Potter still matter? To the extent that the obvious similarities between Voldemort and Trump drive the relationship, one would expect Potter exposure to matter even above and beyond its influence on policy attitudes consistent with Trump's views. Model 3 in table 3 suggests

of exposure to Harry Potter before forming attitudes toward Donald Trump the politician **puts these results on firm ground**. At the time the exposure measures were asked, Trump was not a politician. Years later, when forming their views about Trump, the lessons of Harry Potter were well established.

*Can Harry Potter defeat Donald Trump? Is his orange wig actually a horcrux that, if captured, could weaken the strength of his electoral base? Just as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named gains power from having others refer to him, is Trump's appeal likewise a function of nonstop media fascination and repetition?*

that it does matter. The main difference between model 1 and model 3 is that the impact from social dominance orientation weakens considerably. But, the impact of reading Harry Potter books is sustained. Reading Harry Potter books engenders opposition to Trump in a way that goes beyond encouraging negative attitudes toward outgroups and opposition to punitive policies. It may simply be too difficult for Harry Potter readers to ignore the similarities between Trump and the power-hungry Voldemort.

**DISCUSSION**

As with any observational analyses, it is important to take seriously the limitations of this approach for purposes of establishing causal relationships. It cannot be denied that there is an association between reading Harry Potter books and opposition to Trump as well as the policies he represents. But observational data leave causal conclusions vulnerable to questions of reverse causality as well as potentially spurious relationships. **Temporal precedence**

It is still plausible that these relationships are driven by people who read one Harry Potter book, and thus became aware of the general theme, and, if opposed to the message, declined to read more. Given the continuous nature of these independent variables, this could produce a relationship between Potter-like values and reading more of the books. To see if these relationships are robust to this possibility, I reran all of the analyses in tables 1, 2, and 3 using a dichotomous measure of exposure in which reading no books had a value of 0, and all numbers of books greater than 1 were coded as 1. Quitting the series after one book therefore becomes irrelevant in these results.

These analyses strengthen the case for the central hypothesis in this study. Having read any Harry Potter book predicts a 5–6 point increase in positive evaluations of Muslims and gays. With respect to Trump evaluations, having read any Harry Potter books predicts that a respondent will evaluate Trump over 9 points less on the feeling thermometer scale. These results suggest a substantial

Table 1

**Effects of Reading Harry Potter Books and Viewing Harry Potter Movies on Attitudes Toward Outgroups**

	Attitudes Toward Muslims				Attitudes Toward Homosexuals			
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)
Number of HP Books Read	1.13*	(.55)	—	—	1.54*	(.63)	—	—
Number of HP Movies Seen	—	—	.36	(.19)	—	—	.81***	(.21)
Age	-.11*	(.05)	-.11*	(.05)	-.12*	(.05)	-.11*	(.05)
Education	1.71***	(.40)	1.68***	(.40)	1.70***	(.45)	1.73***	(.45)
Evangelical	-.89	(1.42)	-.88	(1.42)	-13.70***	(1.59)	-13.65***	(1.58)
Female	3.95**	(1.28)	4.46***	(1.27)	8.60***	(1.44)	9.04***	(1.42)
Ideology (conservative)	-2.10***	(.56)	-2.07***	(.56)	-4.80***	(.63)	-4.88***	(.62)
Democratic Party Identification	3.89	(3.93)	2.49	(3.89)	12.32**	(4.41)	10.69*	(4.33)
Republican Party Identification	-3.74	(3.95)	-4.82	(3.91)	7.22	(4.43)	6.00	(4.35)
Social Dominance Orientation	-3.47***	(.36)	-3.49***	(.36)	-2.16***	(.41)	-2.18***	(.41)
R <sup>2</sup>	.21		.21		.29		.30	
Sample size	1431		1430		1430		1430	

Note: Entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variables are 100 point feeling thermometer scales where high is more favorable. \*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05.

Table 2

**Effects of Reading Harry Potter Books and Viewing Harry Potter Movies on Opposition to Punitive Policies**

	Support for Punitive Policies			
	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)
Number of HP Books Read	.04**	(.02)	—	—
Number of HP Movies Seen	—	—	.002	(.01)
Age	.001	(.001)	.001	(.001)
Education	.09***	(.01)	.09***	(.01)
Evangelical	.12**	(.04)	.12**	(.04)
Female	.21***	(.04)	.22***	(.04)
Ideology (conservative)	-.09***	(.02)	-.09***	(.02)
Democratic Party Identification	-.13	(.12)	-.13	(.11)
Republican Party Identification	-.48***	(.12)	-.48***	(.12)
Social Dominance Orientation	-.07***	(.01)	-.06***	(.01)
R <sup>2</sup>	.26		.26	
Sample size	1431		1430	

Note: Entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Index represents the mean level of opposition to three different punitive policies, including the use of torture, killing terrorists and the death penalty (see Appendix A). \*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05.

effect of Harry Potter reading on Trump support, beyond any association caused by self-selection.

It is conceivable that self-selection could occur even among those who had never read a Harry Potter book if they self-selected into or out of Harry Potter's audience based on popular knowledge about the content; for example, the fact that the series involved wizards and witchcraft. For this reason I controlled for those with evangelical religious affiliations. But it is less likely that people would know that the plot encouraged tolerance and non-violence, especially given the frequent criticisms of the story for its gruesomeness.

**Spuriousness** remains the greatest threat in establishing this causal relationship. Although the controls used in these models are extensive, there is no way to guarantee an appropriate model. **However, having experimented with many alternative specifications, I have yet to come up with an alternative specification that explains away this relationship.** Social dominance orientation seemed the most promising suspect, because one can imagine that "tough guys" drawn to Trump's style are unlikely to be voracious readers, but the relationship easily survives this control. Likewise, religious evangelicals might avoid reading books labeled occult fantasies by some, yet also like Trump for his newfound religious fervor. Nonetheless, these relationships persist even when controlling for social dominance as well as other most likely alternative explanations. So **while spuriousness is always possible,** no controls come to mind that make theoretical sense as confounders of the relationship between Trump support and exposure to Harry Potter books. **As Nyhan (2016) suggests, it remains for others to generate and tests such theories.**

Table 3

**Effects of Reading Harry Potter Books and Viewing Harry Potter Movies on Attitudes Toward Donald Trump**

	Attitudes Toward Donald Trump							
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)	Coefficient	(SE)
Number of HP Books Read	-2.33**	(.71)	—	—	-1.92**	(.70)	—	—
Number of HP Movies Seen	—	—	-.21	(.24)	—	—	-.08	(.24)
Age	.11	(.06)	.14*	(.06)	.11	(.06)	.13*	(.06)
Education	-2.84***	(.52)	-3.07***	(.52)	-1.35*	(.52)	-1.60**	(.52)
Evangelical	-2.51	(1.84)	-2.41	(1.84)	-1.85	(1.84)	-1.92	(1.85)
Female	-6.43***	(1.66)	-7.15***	(1.65)	-3.69*	(1.64)	-4.20*	(1.64)
Ideology (conservative)	3.71***	(.73)	3.78***	(.73)	2.43**	(.73)	2.47**	(.73)
Democratic Party Identification	-4.52	(5.87)	-3.22	(5.76)	-7.78	(5.73)	-6.22	(5.62)
Republican Party Identification	19.72**	(5.86)	20.82***	(5.76)	12.56*	(5.74)	14.04*	(5.65)
Social Dominance Orientation	2.51***	(.47)	2.53***	(.47)	.90	(.48)	.96*	(.48)
Punitive Policy Support					-9.80***	(1.19)	-9.70***	(1.19)
Attitudes Toward Muslims					-.15***	(.04)	-.15***	(.04)
Attitudes Toward Homosexuals					-.04	(.03)	-.04	(.03)
R <sup>2</sup>	.37		.37		.44		.43	
Sample size	1128		1131		1086		1088	

Note: Entries are OLS regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable is 100 point feeling thermometer scale where high is more favorable toward Donald Trump.

\*\*\*p<.001, \*\*p<.01, \*p<.05.

CONCLUSION

Can Harry Potter defeat Donald Trump? Is his orange wig actually a horcrux that, if captured, could weaken the strength of his electoral base? Just as He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named gains power from having others refer to him, is Trump's appeal likewise a function of nonstop media fascination and repetition? These questions remain to be answered.

Nonetheless, this study provides some of the first evidence outside of a laboratory that a fictional story may have implications for general election preferences. Observational data have inevitable weaknesses for causal inference, but they have the clear advantage of being able to document influence that has occurred in the real world, not by the forced exposure of a small number of experimental subjects to a story they would not otherwise encounter.

The messages of tolerance for difference and opposition to violence and punitive policies appear to be influential in altering Harry Potter readers' policy views, as well as their support for Trump, even after controlling for their impact on policy attitudes.

Perhaps most importantly, these findings raise the hope that Harry Potter can stop the Deathly Donald and make America great again in the eyes of the world, just as Harry did by ridding the wizard world of Voldemort. By the end of the series, in an obvious Christian analogy, Harry comes to accept the necessity of his own death for the sake of love. The underlying message is that love is stronger than death, thus loyalty and courage are required to resist the temptation to respond to aggressive tactics with still more aggression. If half-bloods, werewolves and others should be treated with respect and fairness as the Potter stories teach, so too should all human beings.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit <http://dx.doi.org/S1049096516001633>. ■

NOTES

1. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/donald-trump/12039134/donald-trump-harry-potter-worse-voldemort-jk-rowling.html>.
2. [www.cnn.com/2015/11/27/.../donald-trump-insults-groups-list/](http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/27/.../donald-trump-insults-groups-list/) or Lee and Quealy (2016).
3. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/23/u-s-spies-slam-donald-trump-s-torture-push.html>.
4. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2016/03/31/trump-rallies-are-getting-more-violent-by-the-week.html>.
5. <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2016/03/13/donald-trump-zones-in-on-core-populist-nationalist-issues-well-make-america-greater-than-ever-before/>.

REFERENCES

Adams, Richard. 18 June 2003. "Quidditch quaintness." *The Guardian* (London). Accessed June 12, 2016 at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jun/18/harrypotter.jkjoannekathleenrowling>

Altemeyer, Robert. 2006. *The Authoritarians*. Retrieved 20 March 2016.

Associated Press, 2007. Dumbledore's Outing Gives Text New Meaning. <http://www.today.com/id/21407911#.V2GpijvD-Co>

Chaffee, Steven H. and Stacey Frank. 1996. "How Americans Get Political Information: Print Versus Broadcast News." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 546: 48–58.

Chaffee, Steven H. and Stacey Frank Kanihan. 1997. "Learning Politics from the Mass Media." *Political Communication* 14 (4): 421–430.

Chotiner, Isaac. 10 February 2016. "Is Donald Trump a Fascist? A Historian of Fascism Weighs In." Accessed June 10, 2016 at [http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/interrogation/2016/02/is\\_donald\\_trump\\_a\\_fascist\\_an\\_expert\\_on\\_fascism\\_weights\\_in.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/interrogation/2016/02/is_donald_trump_a_fascist_an_expert_on_fascism_weights_in.html).

Culbertson, Hugh and Guido H. Stempel III. 1986. "How Media Use And Reliance Affect Knowledge Level." *Communication Research* 13 (4): 579–602.

Dan Quayle vs. Murphy Brown. 1 June 1992. *Time*. Accessed October 11, 2006, from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,975627,00.html>.

Donahue, Deirdre. 16 November 2001. "Potter inspires academic analysis." *USA Today*. Accessed June 14, 2016 at <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/books/potter/2001-11-16-analysis.htm>.

Farah, Safy-Hallan. 2016 (June 2). Trump Supporters Duped By Motivational Voldemort Posters. Accessed 6/17/2016 at <http://www.papermag.com/trump-supporters-duped-by-1837460900.html>.

Feldman, Stanley and Lee Sigelman. 1985. "The Political Impact Of Prime-Time Television: 'The Day After.'" *The Journal of Politics* 47 (2): 556–578.

Fierman, Daniel. 31 August 2005. "The Harry Potter Craze." *Entertainment Weekly*. Accessed June 16, 2016 at <http://www.ew.com/article/2000/07/21/harry-potter-craze>.

Frank, T. A. 14 June 2016. Is Donald Trump An Actual Fascist? In The Wake Of The Mass Shooting In Orlando, How Dangerous Could A Trump Presidency Be? *Vanity Fair*. Accessed <http://www.vanityfair.com/news/2016/06/is-donald-trump-an-actual-fascist>.

Franklin, Daniel P. 2006. *Politics and Film: The Political Culture of Film in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

French, Perrin L. and Judith van Hoorn. 1986. "Half A Nation Saw Nuclear War And Nobody Blink? A Reassessment Of The Impact Of 'The Day After' In Terms Of A Theoretical Chain Of Causality." *International Journal of Mental Health* 15 (1–3): 276–297.

Gass, Nick. 18 December 2015. Trump On Putin's Alleged Killing Of Journalists: 'At Least He's A Leader'. <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/trump-praises-putin-216929#ixzz4Bg7ltPL>.

Gerson, Michael. 26 October 2007. "Harry Potter's Secret". *The Washington Post*. Accessed June 15, 2016 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/25/AR2007102502233.html>.

Gibbs, Nancy. 2007. "Person of the Year 2007 Runners-up: J. K. Rowling." *Time*, December 23. Accessed June 14, 2016 at [http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753\\_1695388\\_1695436,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/2007/personoftheyear/article/0,28804,1690753_1695388_1695436,00.html).

Gierzynski, Anthony, with Kathryn Eddy. 2013. *Harry Potter and the Millennials: Research Methods and the Politics of the Muggle Generation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Hartmann, Margaret. 2016. Is Donald Trump Voldemort or King Joffrey? <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/02/donald-trump-voldemort-or-king-joffrey.html#>. February 22.

Hillyard, Vaughn. 2015. Donald Trump's Plan for a Muslim Database Draws Comparison to Nazi Germany. NBC News. November 20.

Hitchens, Christopher. 2007. "The Boy Who Lived." *The New York Times Sunday Book Review*. August 12. Accessed June 15, 2016 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/12/books/review/Hitchens-t.html>.

Holbert, R. Lance, Owen Pillion, David A. Tschida, Greg G. Armfield, Kelly Kinder, Kristin L. Cherry, and Amy R. Daulton. 2003. "The West Wing As Endorsement of the US Presidency: Expanding The Bounds of Priming in Political Communication." *Journal of Communication* 53 (3): 427–43.

Holbert, R. Lance, Dhavan V. Shah, and Nojin Kwak. 2003. "Political Implications of Prime-Time Drama and Sitcom Use: Genres Of Representation and Opinions Concerning Women's Rights." *Journal of Communication* 53 (1): 45–60.

—. 2004. "Fear, Authority, and Justice: Crime-Related TV Viewing and Endorsements of Capital Punishment and Gun Ownership." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81 (2): 343–363.

Isaac, Bronwyn. 2016. "Trump Supporters Really Love These Motivational Posters With Voldemort Quotes." June 3. Accessed 6/17/2016 at <http://www.thefrisky.com/2016-06-03/trump-supporters-really-love-these-motivational-posters-with-voldemort-quotes/>.

Kagan, Robert. 2016. This is How Fascism Comes to America. *Washington Post*. May 18. Accessed June 15, 2016 at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/this-is-how-fascism-comes-to-america/2016/05/17/c4e32c58-1c47-11e6-8c7b-6931e6633e7\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/this-is-how-fascism-comes-to-america/2016/05/17/c4e32c58-1c47-11e6-8c7b-6931e6633e7_story.html).

Kessler, Glenn. 2015. Trump's Outrageous Claim that 'Thousands' of New Jersey Muslims Celebrated the 9/11 Attacks. *Washington Post*. November 22.

Lee, Jasmine C. and Kevin Quealy. 2016. The 224 People, Places and Things Donald Trump Has Insulted on Twitter: A Complete List. *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/01/28/upshot/donald-trump-twitter-insults.html>.

Lenart, Silvo and Kathleen M. McGraw. 1989. "America Watches 'Amerika': Television Docudrama and Political Attitudes." *Journal of Politics* 51 (3): 697–712.

- Lichfield, John. 2004. "French Go Potty over Harry's Politics." *The Star*. July 5.
- McCaffrey, Meg. 2003. "'Muggle' Redux in the Oxford English Dictionary". *School Library Journal*. May 1.
- Mondak, Jeffrey J. 1995. "Newspapers and Political Awareness." *American Journal of Political Science* 39 (2): 513-27.
- Mutz, Diana C. and Lilach Nir. 2010. "Not Necessarily the News: Does Fictional Television Influence Real-World Policy Preferences?" *Mass Communication and Society* 13 (2): 196-217.
- Neuman, W. Russell. 1974. "Political Knowledge - Comparison of Impact of Print and Broadcast News Media." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 38 (3): 444-5.
- New York Times. 2007. 'Harry Potter' tale is fastest-selling book in history. July 23. Accessed June 16 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/23/business/worldbusiness/23iht-potter.4.6789605.html>.
- Nyhan, Brendan. 2016. "A Checklist Manifesto for Peer Review." *The Political Methodologist* 23 (1): 4-6.
- Pratto, Felicia, et al. 2012. Social Dominance in Context and in Individuals: Contextual Moderation of Robust Effects of Social Dominance Orientation in 15 Languages and 20 Countries. *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 4 (5): 587-599.
- Rowling, J. K. 1997. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Schneck, Ken. 2016. "What If Donald Trump Really Is Voldemort?" *Huffington Post*, March 8. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ken-schneck-phd/what-if-donald-trump-real\\_b\\_9400054.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ken-schneck-phd/what-if-donald-trump-real_b_9400054.html).
- Schoefer, Christine. 2000. "Harry Potter's Girl Trouble." *Salon.com*, January 12. Accessed June 10, 2016 at <http://www.salon.com/2000/01/13/potter/>.
- Shabad, Rebecca. 2016. Mike Pence In 1999 Op-Ed: Disney's "Mulan" is Liberal Propaganda. *CBS News*, July 18. Accessed July 19, 2016 at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/mike-pence-mulan-disney-is-liberal-propaganda-1999-op-ed/>.
- Sigelman, L., & C. K Sigelman. 1974. "The Politics Of Popular Culture: Campaign Cynicism And "The Candidate." *Sociology of Social Research* 58: 272-77.
- Strange, Jeffrey J. 2002. "How Fictional Tales Wag Real-World Beliefs" in *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations*, eds. Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange, and Timothy C. Brock, 263-86. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Watson, Julie. 2004. "J. K. Rowling and the Billion-Dollar Empire." *Forbes*, February 26. Accessed June 16, 2016 at [https://www.google.com/?gws\\_rd=ssl#q=J.+K.+Rowling+and+the+Billion-Dollar+Empire](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=J.+K.+Rowling+and+the+Billion-Dollar+Empire).
- Yokaris, Ilias. 2004. "Harry Potter, Market Wiz." *New York Times*, July 18. Accessed June 15, 2016 at <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/07/18/opinion/harry-potter-market-wiz.html>.