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'We seize control  
for  
the



ERASMUS  
UNIVERSITY  
ROTTERDAM

COMMUNITY CONSTRUCTION  
WITHIN THE HARRY POTTER  
FAN

greater good'

Master Thesis Media & Journalism  
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Abstract

Key words: fan studies, community construction, social capital, politics, convergence culture

The objective of this thesis was to map how we can learn from fan cultures in relation to politics. It was assumed, that by exploring a fandom, fan practices would be comparable with political processes. A fan community is a micro-democracy, which shows, as seen in the results of this thesis, strong cohesion, because of the mutual object of affection. In order to jump to that conclusion, this thesis explored the role of community construction and social capital within the Harry Potter fan community. Therefore, the main question asked is: how is community construction realized within the Harry Potter fandom? Community construction is involved with the sense of belonging to a community and how one plays a role in this. Social capital is concerned with the number of connections one can gather and therefore can offer an insight in the rise or decline of social cohesion.

With the help of a content analysis performed on two fan websites and interviews with fans an insight is given in the construction of the fan community. The results of this research indicate that social capital indeed plays a great role within belonging to a community, though it has to be seen as a factor that can change. A fan can opt to fulfil an active role or not. Fans discuss, share and argue about the topic which indicates they have a certain knowledge or seek to learn that in order to participate within the community.

The most important lesson to be learned from this thesis is that active engagement and participation within a fandom (and thereby comparable to engagement and participation with real life politics) are caused by having or looking for a mutual factor. This makes it interesting to understand the workings of a fandom for political ends.

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So, here it is. The thing I jokingly started calling my master piece. Correct me if I'm wrong by now ;)

Enjoy reading and remember: draco dormiens, numquam titillandus!

Simone Driessen

## Contents

1 Introduction: ‘That gives us the right to rule, but it also gives us responsibilities over the ruled...’ (Dumbledore)	6
2 The fandom as community: ‘When in doubt, go to the library’ (Ron)	8
2.1 The recognition of the active audience and fandom	8
2.2 The (virtual) fan community	10
2.3 Power within the fandom	12
2.4 Conclusion	15
3 Community Construction and Social capital: ‘Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open’ (Dumbledore)	17
3.1 The concepts of community construction and social capital	17
3.2 Bourdieu versus Putnam	23
3.3 Capital in relation to hierarchy in fandoms	25
3.4 Conclusion	29
4. Methodology: “I solemnly swear I’m up to no good” (Harry)	31
4.1 Harry Potter fan communities	31
4.2 Community Construction and identifiers for social capital	33
4.3 Interviews	36
4.4 Conclusion	39
5. Results: “She'll only believe in things as long as there's no proof at all” (Hermione)	40
5.1 Acquired connections: Direct replies within Mugglenet.com and Drezels.com	40
5.2 Position	42
5.3 Othering	49
5.4 Authenticity/ Subcultural Capital	55
5.5 Playing	60
5.6 Conclusion	65
6. Conclusion: Voting for the greater good “We seize control for the greater good” (Grindelwald)	76
6.1 Imagining the Fan Democracy?	76
6.2 Discussion	80

6.3 Final Thoughts	82
List of references	83
Appendix A: Coding scheme	87
Appendix B: Interviews Topic lists	91
Appendix C: Originals from translations	93

## **1 Introduction: ‘That gives us the right to rule, but it also gives us responsibilities over the ruled...’ (Dumbledore)**

When Harry Potter was ‘born’ in 1997 his creator, J.K. Rowling, probably never had foreseen the ‘*Pottermania*’ it turned into. Even after the last movie airing in 2011 an interactive project called ‘*Pottermore*’ has to keep the fans’ attention. Fans are not powerless elites (Hills, 2002), they are acknowledged as active agents. They use their fandom for pleasure, escapism, discussion and even social activism, which is also visible in the activities of the Harry Potter fandom. The fans play Wizard Rock, created an International Quidditch Organisation; have a theme park in Orlando (US); organized a Harry Potter Alliance that stands up against silent disasters; and the word ‘Muggle’ got included in the Oxford English Dictionary (Pyne, 2010).

These actions and projects fans set up, are interesting to compare to actions and projects in the ‘real world’. This thesis illustrates, with the example of the Harry Potter fandom, how fan practices can be compared to political processes. It is argued that a fandom is a small micro democracy (Jenkins, 2006), which makes it motivating to look at what can be learned from a fan community. The main question of this thesis therefore is: how is community construction realized within the Harry Potter fandom? Its objective is to explore how a fan community is constructed and what we can learn from it for ‘real life’ democracy.

This thesis draws on three themes to explore how a community can be constructed. The first theme is that of using a fan community<sup>1</sup> as a research group and how it fits in the field of Cultural Studies. The academic contribution of this thesis is to combine and relate fan studies and politics, a combination which has not been thoroughly researched. Previous studies highlighted an external look on a fandom: how fans performances where a way of escapism to overcome (social) inequalities in real life, while this study wants to highlight internal aspects of the fandom, namely how cohesion, support and integration from within a fandom can play an exemplary role for real life politics. Cultural Studies is the main branch in social sciences

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<sup>1</sup> The fandom of Harry Potter has been the subject of previous studies: Jenkins (2006, 2004) and Rogozinska (2007) both carried out studies on the fans of Harry Potter as active audience, and they explored how the fandom is constituted and how fans challenge the presented meaning of the text. Zipes (2000) and Gupta (2009) also investigated Harry Potter and focused on the influence the books had on non-native English readers and how it helped them participate in global communities. It thereby highlighted the convergence of low and high culture. Mendlesohn (2004) researched the way authority is shaped in the Harry Potter books and how authority is challenged by its readers in real-life, combining the junction of high and low culture again.

and humanities that focuses on the concept of the active audience and how they display agency when actively giving meaning to a presented media text (Hall, 1973), but also in the convergence of high (politics) and low (pop) culture (Jenkins, 2006, Van Zoonen, 2004).

This convergence of high and low culture is considered a positive development in Cultural Studies, which leads to the second theme and this thesis' social relevance: the celebratory vision of the fan democracy. The thesis contributes to it by explaining how a 'fan democracy' can make us understand politics better. It is argued that to restore democracy we could learn from the convergence of traditional and popular means (Levy, 2001, Van Zoonen, 2004). This junction can cause resistance or challenge traditional institutions, therefore it is an essential process for restoring democratic citizenship. It has to be recognized that small, local-based experiments will be the learning sites to see how a larger community or even a democracy should function. Putnam (2000) states that they may be seen as micro-democracies (already visible in for example the community of boy scouts). A fan community could also be representative, because it shows conditions and practices that would be favourable to mature in democracy (Van Zoonen, 2004:46).

The third subject is related to these practices and conditions, for it entails the concepts of community construction and social capital. If fan practices might be comparable to 'real life' politics it is relevant to explore these concepts. Van Zoonen (2004: 45) argues it is more necessary to focus on the character of fan activities than on 'the reality of political activities'. Community construction is involved with the sense of belonging to a community and how one plays a role in this (Van Zoonen, 2007:9). Social capital is concerned with the number of connections one can gather and therefore can offer an insight in the rise or decline of social cohesion. Thus, these concepts may offer an insight in how a 'real life' democracy can learn from a fan community. In order to explore this fans' comments on two news websites (Dutch and international) were analysed and ten fans were interviewed. These two methods offer a qualitative look at the Harry Potter fandom and how community construction is realized within that fandom.

The three themes appear throughout the thesis, which starts off with a general overview of the current status quo about fandoms and (online) fan communities. Then, it explores and defines the concepts of social capital and community construction and how they relate to fan cultures. Afterwards, the Harry Potter community is explored on these concepts with the help of a content analysis and interviews with fans. Finally, this thesis provides a suggestion of how its results can be a means of help for 'real life' politics.

## **2 The fandom as community: ‘When in doubt, go to the library’ (Ron)**

Fans have been the subject of study in the field of Cultural Studies ever since the academic acknowledgement of the active audience in the 1970s. Yet, hierarchies within a fan community have not yet gained a lot of attention (Hills, 2002); neither has its relation to political involvement or activism been thoroughly researched (De Kloet & Van Zoonen, 2007). It is argued, that focusing on the character of fan activities learning points may be offered for real political activities (Van Zoonen, 2004).

This thesis does not solely focus on fans, but on how community construction plays a role within a fandom. However, this does not mean that ‘fans’ and their history in Cultural Studies may be forgotten. To figure out how community construction plays a role within fan studies, it is important to put fans and fan studies in perspective. Therefore, this chapter includes a short overview of the recognition of the active audience and the role of fans within that acknowledgement. Second, it focuses on the (virtual) fan community itself. Lastly, it will elaborate briefly on how power relations within a fan community already have been explored.

### **2.1 The recognition of the active audience and fandom**

Before taking a look at how a fandom is constituted or how fans and their practices are classified, the concepts of fans and fandom are explored. The word fan derives from the word *fanatic*, which is Latin for ‘insanely’, but divinely inspired and stands for someone who is enthusiastic about a certain object and can also be seen a supporter of the object, and as devoted to it. The word supporter is a synonym for the word fan, but is more often used in sports or politics. According to Jenkins (1992), the word fan itself holds a negative connotation in our contemporary culture. He challenges the negative, passive image of fans as pathological, screaming girls by comparing a fan to a poacher: fans ‘poach’ for what they need and adapt that to their own lifestyle. That makes the fan an active, rather than a passive, audience member. Butler (2006) on the other hand, asserts, in line with Jenkins (1992), that fans use the fandom and their preferred object as a means to construct or support their identity. Therefore they could challenge the object, but also pretend to be exactly like the object and would therefore not criticize the reading. Negative views of fans within fan studies still exist. Sandvoss (2005) for instance, does not acknowledge fans as active audience



members, but states that most fans accept the preferred reading of media producers or do not challenge the object of fandom to adapt it to their own lives. This short sketch of different views illustrates how complex it is to agree on a fan and define a fixed definition of a fan's performance. What these academics do agree on is that fans actively perform their fandom.

The origins of the recognition of the active audience can be traced back to Hall (1973) and Morley (1980). Hall (1973) asserts that there are three ways for an audience member to understand the meaning of a media text for producers encode certain messages. The way in which these messages are decoded (their reception) can differ from that intention. The audience can either accept the preferred reading of its producers; they can negotiate its meaning (negotiated reading), or they can develop an oppositional reading, thereby contesting the message producers wanted to carry out. Morley (1980) analyzed these factors in his study about Nationwide, a current affairs program aired by BBC, whereby he interviewed different groups of viewers and analyzed how they constructed their meanings about the program. Three different groups of viewers produced three different readings of the show. This indicates that there are several ways to actively give meaning to a without just accepting the producers' meaning.

Before looking at how a fan community is constructed, it is important to know what fans do within that community. This can be done by illustrating how they are productive and active within the community. As already stated before, being a fan entails performing the activity of being a fan. Fiske (1992:37) argues that popular culture, of which fandom is a part, should not be understood at the level of reception, but in terms of productivity. Fans are very productive, he claims (1992:37), and he distinguishes three types of productivity. Firstly, a fan can display semiotic productivity, which means people give meaning to the object of fandom or the text. They are 'fan', but do not make it public<sup>2</sup>. If they do make it known, it shows the second type of productivity, namely enunciative productivity. This means they give meaning to the object by talking about it or at least sharing their affection, and perhaps also show it in style of clothes which allows them to construct a social identity that belongs to a particular group. Textual productivity finally, means that fans by critically reflecting on the object become producers themselves. They start producing their own texts and circulate them among other fans, not for economic gain. They are, nevertheless, from a high quality.

The different types of productivity, which together form their own systems of

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<sup>2</sup> In Jenkins & Tulloch's terminology this would be a 'follower', not a fan (1995:23)

production and distribution, make it plausible that Fiske typifies a fan culture as a '*shadow cultural economy*' (Fiske, 1992:30). Even though it lies outside the cultural industries, it shares features that normal popular culture lacks. Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) also upholds a fan-classification that can be related to popular, active, political culture. They categorize fans into five groups of which three are an addition to Fiske's (1992) theory. They (1998:43) state that fans can be consumers (doing nothing), fans, cultists, enthusiasts or producers. Based on the structure of Abercrombie & Longhurst, Van Zoonen (2004) claims that the groups of fans, cultists and enthusiasts can be related to the ways people engage with politics. Firstly, voters would be like fans, supporting or being attached to a certain political group (Van Zoonen, 2004:44). Secondly, cultists are those who join a political group to enunciate (enunciative productivity, see Fiske, 1992) their political preference; they meet up and may even distribute specialized materials. Lastly, the enthusiast is the voter who becomes the politician or a political representative for a party. So, electorates may be constructed quite equally to a community of fans; the activities they perform are different (Van Zoonen, 2004:45).

Thus, having made clear fans are performing within their fandom, it is possible to see how the community is constructed by elaborating on how the community is active and how power relations in the community are present.

## **2.2. The (virtual) fan community**

Before looking further into the triangle of power, politics and fandom and how they relate, it is worth looking at the concept of the fan community and why people get involved in a fandom. According to Rogozinska (2007:1) a fandom is a group of fans of a specific text with its own hierarchy, values system, lingo and involvement in the subculture. Jenkins (1992) shares this view partially, though he is inspired by De Certeau's idea of 'poaching' (De Certeau, 1984), of a fan using a text and appropriating the elements of the text to his own life. Fiske even takes it a step further and looks at a fandom from a societal perspective. He indicates that fandom is also associated with the cultural tastes of undermined groups, especially those disempowered by any combination of race, gender, class and age (1992:30). Fiske thus sees a fandom as a source of resistance.

The most important notion, however, is that there is no clear suggestion of passive or active fans, or a scale that measures when someone is a good or bad fan within the

community. However, this division, which Hills (2000) describes as ‘moral dualism’, can be found in several studies<sup>3</sup>. A fan’s identity and membership of a community are not fixed details, but they are liquid attributes. A passive fan can grow into an active one and a ‘lurker’ (someone who is passive in the fandom, reading and watching, but not actively participating) can become a really active community member. Most fan studies focused on naturally occurring communities, but this undermines the way fans ‘swim’ through multiple fandoms in various stages of their lives (Hills, 2002:89).

Hills (2002) defines several dimensions that together constitute a fan community: affect, attachment, passion and commodification. In line with these dimensions are Jenkins five characteristics of a fandom (1992:278-280). Firstly, involvement with a text is a mixture of simultaneously constructing emotional proximity and critical distance. Fans give meaning to a text and share that with other fans. Secondly, fandom involves a particular set of ‘readings’, of how to interpret and critically assess the text. This is similar to Rogozinska’s (2007) idea of a specific lingo and value system within the community. Thirdly, Jenkins (1992) calls fandom a foundation for consumer activism, which particularly has to do with the idea that the fandom is a powerless elite<sup>4</sup> who produce their own texts and share and circulate these texts as an extension of their own readings<sup>5</sup>. The fourth feature is that fans are not mere consumers, but also Abercrombie & Longhurst’s (1992) ‘petty producers’. Fan art or narratives can challenge the official narrative of institutions. This type of activism occurred for instance with the filming of *Lord of the Rings*. According to Shefrin (2004), director Peter Jackson took fan suggestions into consideration, which led to the grand success of the movies. Lastly, fandom serves as an alternative social community: it’s a ‘weekend-only world’, which offers an escape to a reality that holds more humane and democratic values (Jenkins, 1992:280).

Even though not every media consumer interacts online in a virtual community yet, some are still discussing their objects of fandom with just their family and friends, offline. Nevertheless, it is important to explore the possibilities and differences of the virtual fan community in relation to the traditional fan community. In the age of media convergence, Jenkins (2006:26) argues that modes of reception are enabled that were not present before.

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<sup>3</sup> For instance in the work of Bacon-Smith, who indicated the passive, hysterical women stereotype fan, while her ways of classifying fans is contradicted by Jenkins’ positive, active and poaching fans (of *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* for example) or Radway (*Reading the romance: bouquet-readers that actively construct identity with help of the books*) or Liebes and Katz (*The export of Meaning: cross-cultural readings of Dallas: who analyzed Dallas-fans and how they gave meaning to the show*).

<sup>4</sup> Hills contradicts this idea too; fans are not just a powerless elite (2006).

<sup>5</sup> Van Zoonen, 2004, states that fans even propose alternatives if they do not agree with the original texts.

He claims that the water cooler has gone digital and that online forums offer a chance for members to distribute knowledge and share meanings. Watching television alone is hardly done, for afterwards the show can be discussed online, chatting with friends or on a forum or fan website.

The difference between pre-Internet fandoms and the communities that developed in the Internet-era is that the former were closed off and required connections in order to get access, so one was dependent on the power connections of a few fans who decided who could join (Rogozinska, 2007:3). The rise of the Internet, Rogozinska (2007) argues, allowed fandoms to be more creative and made them easier to access. Changes in hierarchy occurred, according to Rogozinska (2007:4), because everyone could now either create content or consume it, or at least the Internet created the opportunity to do so. There is no longer a dependence on an editor who approves a story, for instance to appear in a fan magazine: users can create content and, if desirable, receive feedback via the Internet. Thus, fan power is increasingly based on interactivity and creativity (Rogozinska, 2007:4). The main change caused by the Internet is that there is almost no authority of mentors or editors (Rogozinska, 2007:4), though, that it will probably still be a challenge whose blog or which fan fiction story will become most popular.

### **2.3 Power within the fandom**

Being a fan is thus about showing activity and productivity. This may also lead to, what can be seen as, negative factors within the fan community and the relationships within the fandom. Fans can discriminate fiercely. They set clear boundaries between what falls within their fandom and what does not (Fiske, 1992:34). They display so called textual or social discrimination by arguing about what characteristics allow someone to become a true fan and be included in the fandom. Therefore being a fan is a peculiar mix of cultural purposes, argues Fiske (1992:34). These fan practices, namely the power relations of a fandom, can be considered as illustrative for political practices (the changing power relations) in real life and in politics.

According to Jenkins (2006) and Putnam (2000), older, traditional forms of social community life are breaking down. Both argue this decline is due to less rooting in physical geography (people move house or emigrate), traditional family bonds that are diminishing (more single parents, less marriages), and to the decreasing loyalty of citizens to the nation-state. However, Jenkins (2006:27) claims there are new forms of communities emerging, even

though they have a more voluntary, temporary, and deliberate character than traditional forms. These new types of communities are endorsed by a common intellectual enterprise and emotional investments (Jenkins, 2006:27). Thus, they are held together by mutual production, reciprocity and exchange. These factors can be found in a fan community. Therefore this thesis will address the concept of community construction to be able to consider if and how a fandom could be this utopian community.

The concept of community construction has been fruitfully defined by Baym (1999) as an ‘ongoing creation’, generated and drawing on negotiations that occur in communication to create shared values, relationships, identities, and conventions, and a feeling of community<sup>6</sup>. Fan cultures may not share a single, uniformly, oppositional attitude towards the established culture, but they try to challenge it in their own way to raise the value of their own taste by demonstrating it with their knowledge (Jancovich, 2002:314). By building up and acquiring subcultural capital and by trying to make that mutual or common intelligence, they can exchange it within their community. This makes the process reciprocal and shows personal investment is essential in this reciprocity.

A fan’s knowledge, therefore, is an important site for struggle within the fandom for knowledge assures them of a certain position. Before being able to explore how this knowledge is displayed in the community and the social position of fans (their social capital), it is therefore necessary to investigate how this credit of knowledge can be gathered. Williams (2004:3) states that within a fandom fans can gain social capital, simply defined as a network<sup>7</sup>, which is based on their subcultural capital. Subcultural capital can be seen as the knowledge and amount of engagement of a fan. This capital, also theorized by Bourdieu (1986), lies, just like symbolic capital, in the eyes of the other and not with the fans themselves. As Fiske (1992) states ‘knowledge is a source of power’, whereby the ‘experts’ are differentiated from the rest because they achieved their status based on their knowledge. Subcultural capital is important for fans, for it lets them engage in discussions and participation within the fandom (Williams, 2004:3). In her research on Buffy the Vampire Slayer fans, Williams (2004) discovered a certain way of how spoiler fans network and how their power relations are constructed.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The concept of community construction will be addressed extensively in chapter 3.

<sup>7</sup> The different types of capital by Bourdieu and Putnam will be explained in chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup> Spoiling entails the act of leaking unknown information to other fans and therefore already shows a relationship between the fans themselves (the spoilers and non-spoilers) and the contacts these spoiling fans

Jenkins (2006) draws on Levy's (2001) concept of collective intelligence to explain the importance of knowledge within a community: collective intelligence is the ability of (virtual) communities to control the combined expertise of their members which could become particularly useful when media consumers negotiate or argue with media producers. Thus, it could be argued that collective intelligence would be the ability of people to stand together to reach a certain goal, with strong ties because they share the same expertise or share a strong emotional investment.

Levy (2001) also shares his thoughts about how collective intelligence could be suitable for politics. He believes that new kinds of political power will emerge which will operate alongside and challenge the hegemony of the nation-state (and its economic might of corporate capitalism). He even argues that these knowledge communities are central to the task of restoring citizenship (Levy, 2001). Van Zoonen (2004) argues in a similar vein that to restore democracy, we could learn from the convergence of popular culture and traditional means. Both Van Zoonen and Levy claim that this convergence can cause resistance or challenge traditional institutions, and is therefore an essential process for restoring democratic citizenship. The model of collective intelligence is an achievable utopia, states Levy (2001), yet he recognizes that small, local-based experiments will be the learning sites to see how a knowledge community will function. Putnam (2000) also argues for the importance of small communities as examples of how a community should function at a broader, more general level. These smaller communities may be seen as micro-democracies and are already visible in community life too, for example the community of boy scouts (Putnam, 2000). A fan community could also function as an example of a micro democracy, because they have practices that can be compared to democratic processes too.

Looking at the current status quo about power within a fandom, Williams declares (2004:4) in a similar vein to Rogozinska (2007), that a community is a group of fans with 'shared laws, rules and codes of practice and interpretation'. Criticizing Levy, she states fandoms should not be seen as utopian, for they also overlook and 'other' fans within the community (Williams, 2004). They should be seen as social hierarchies where fans share a common interest, but at the same time compete over understanding of the text, access to the object of fandom and status (Hills, 2002). This can be related to the amount of subcultural capital a fan can build up and thereby obtain a higher status. In order to discover how this

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have with the industry. Jenkins (2006) also took spoiler fans as example to look for hierarchy within a fandom (see also 3.3.2).

social hierarchy within the group is constructed, Williams (2004) refers to MacDonald's five types of fan hierarchy (see MacDonald, 1998): hierarchy of knowledge (which can be seen as subcultural capital); fandom level or quality (the way one reads the text); access; leaders, and venue. Fans who are at the top of all of these five features are *executive fans*. These executives can be referred to as top-status fans; those who hold almost all the power or are most popular within a fandom.

Another important factor in the subcultural capital is— as Williams (2004) labeled it — the 'discursive power' of a fan. Although there may not be a direct influence online of an editor, there are still fans who have blogs and who provide detailed and intimate knowledge about the text, and who could influence the ways in which fellow fans 'read' the text (Williams, 2004:6). In other words, executive fans can set the agenda for other fans, which could lead to what Hills (2006:105) describes as the 'serialization of fan culture itself' (fans becoming 'sub-cultural celebs'). Richardson and Turley (2008:33) state that it is not about *what* one consumes in the fandom, but *how* one consumes: through which channels or what sites proper information is accessible to become member of the group. It could be plausible that if 'lower-status' fans want to increase their social capital or achieve something within the fandom, they could at least perform the relationship to befriend executive fans or get involved with them to be influential.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Fandoms are still to be explored, which is why this thesis focuses on a not thoroughly identified aspect, namely community construction and the role of social capital. This chapter first looked at the (virtual) community itself. The most important notion to conclude is that fandoms have changed over time, due to the rise of the Internet. Changes in hierarchy occurred, for creating content and consuming it became easier because of the Internet's open character. Basically, everyone has the opportunity to get involved with the group, no one is 'othered' out. (Although this also brings on new complications for the Internet needs moderators to offer some form of control.)

Then the power structures within the fandom were discussed. The fandom is tied together according to Hills (2000), because of affect, attachment, passion, commodification, and a particular set of reading. Thus, the principal aspect that brings fans together is their search for commonality: seeking like-minded to share and discuss their affection with. When this search for mutuality is compared to politics and real-life democracy, it may be argued that

these fans try to create a small utopia of collective intelligence (based on the idea of Levy, 2001). Spreading and sharing information with each other, leads to a new consensus within the community, which creates the ability to stand together to reach a certain goal. Therefore, the role of knowledge of fans and their authenticity should not be undermined or overlooked when studying fans. As indicated by Van Zoonen (2004), this convergence of traditional and new means can be instructive to restore a better sense of democratic citizenship.

A third central concept in this chapter was executive fans. These fans entail a certain power position within the fandom and it is argued they can set the agenda for other fans. They may hold a higher position within the fandom, because of a higher social capital or subcultural capital. However, it is not yet discussed if these fans also take up a leader position to draw the community closer together.

Thus, even though there might be a decline in social cohesion in real life, fans seem to be a group that still bond because of an object of mutual interest. Thereby their own network (social capital) plays a great role, as does their way of 'swimming' through this network. By gathering more knowledge they can become higher, equal or 'othered' in position. This is a way of how the community can be 'under construction'. Therefore it is interesting to look at what factors entail social capital and how this concept fulfills a role in community construction. That is why the following chapter will deal with these concepts and how they help to explore how the Harry Potter fan community is constructed.



### **3 Community Construction and Social capital: 'Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open' (Dumbledore)**

The focus of this thesis is to explore community construction in order to understand how participation and engagement in a fandom lead to political involvement. Power relations, hierarchy and the place of executive fans are features within the process of how a fandom is built up and form elements that can be related to the 'real-life' politics. To get an in-depth look at this relationship, this thesis focuses on community construction and social capital within a fandom. For they, respectively, entail the way the community is created and the network of relationships within the community.

Community construction is the first topic that is dealt with and defined in this chapter. The concept of social capital has been most significantly theorized by Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000). Secondly, this chapter outlines their approaches to social capital. Consequently, this chapter discusses applications of these concepts - provided by Jenkins and Hills - to effectively translate the concept of social capital effectively to fan cultures. Fourthly, these concepts and their applications are brought together to relate the concept of social capital to fan studies. Lastly, this chapter focuses on the relationship between community construction and social capital.

#### **3.1 The concepts of community construction and social capital**

Two main factors to be considered are the concepts of community construction and social capital. Community construction and cohesion, can be argued, depend on several factors. To understand how a community is constructed, it is useful to see how the concept is defined.

Baym (1999:200) offers a definition which is worth quoting at length:

Community construction: an ongoing creation, manifested, challenged and recreated through negotiations that occur implicitly in every message. As people write, they draw selectively on the features of the medium, the joint projects available, their personal histories and experiences, and the group's history in ways that collaboratively co-construct the values, relationships identities and conventions that make a group feel like a community.

This highlights how the community will show itself within the fan *discourse (negotiations that occur in a message)* and how *joined activities* will create values, relationships and rules

that form a group into a community. Fans seek through discourse a mutual agreement and understanding of Harry Potter, the object of their affection. By looking for this agreement or discussion, we can infer from Baym (1999) that they will look for a place where others are familiar with Harry Potter. By assuming this, the network they operate in is an important second factor. Therefore, social capital is an important concept to be explored in relation to community construction. It is expected that using the concept of social capital as a starting point, an in-depth exploration of community construction can be offered.

The concept of social capital is related to the words 'network' or 'connectedness'. Like most concepts, social capital does not have one fixed definition. A community can be seen as a network, or a group of people interacting. It could also refer to a group of people organized around common values. The Latin word *communitas* simply entails the idea that a community is a broad term for a fellowship or organized society. The sense of connectedness within a community, can be described as social capital (Putnam, 2000). Coleman (1988) describes social capital in broader terms. He considers it as a means of facilitating individual or collective action based on relationships of trust, reciprocity and social norms. It is not all about action or mobilizing: one has to see the importance of the collective and shared basis in these relations.

### **3.1.1 Bourdieu's social capital**

The first thing to consider when trying to explain Bourdieu's concept of capital is to reconstruct his concept of culture. He sees culture as an economy, in which people invest and from which they gather capital (Bourdieu, in Fiske, 1992:30-31). Capital can be read as a resource or a certain investment which, if invested in by a person, can lead to a disposition of a certain type of capital. Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes four 'main' types of capital; cultural capital, economic capital, social capital and symbolic capital.

Cultural capital can be described as the different types of knowledge a person has, gained by education, certain skills he developed well and by certain advantages a person has which gives him a certain position in society (Bourdieu, 1986). Economic capital is literally about the economic situation of a person, for it entails the financial resources one has: cash, assets or other economic resources (Bourdieu, 1986). Symbolic capital was added later by Bourdieu to indicate a person could also gain status and prestige, or a good reputation, judged by others (Bourdieu, 2010). Cultural capital, then, is capital based on knowledge and education; economic capital stands for one's economic resources, and symbolic capital is the

status one is assigned to by others. In explaining these types of capital, Bourdieu takes an economic approach (Hills, 2002: 47). It is worth to quote Bourdieu at full length and analyze his approach to social capital:

Social capital is the sum of the resources actual or virtual those accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

(Bourdieu, 1986:52)

With this definition Bourdieu indicates that social capital entails the amount or accumulation of relationships or connections one can have as individual (or as part of a group), based on shared contacts. The more connections an individual (or group) has, the more credit (and) or reliability he has. Bourdieu continues by stating that the amount of social capital possessed by 'the agent' depends on his connections and the size of his own network, which he can mobilize by his own volume of capital (for example how many friends does he bring into the network, how many of them fit in the network and how many of them can be mobilized). Therefore the creation of a network is not a natural given, but a product of continuous reproduction and creation (Bourdieu, 1986:52). This is in the spirit of Baym's (1999) idea of seeing community construction as an ongoing process.

A network of relationships can be seen as the product of investment strategies by the individual or by a group. These strategies could be set up consciously or unconsciously, for they are aimed at founding and reproducing connections that are useful on the short and long term (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore Bourdieu (1986) argues people or individuals that already have a great amount of accumulated social capital are sought after, for they add value to the connectedness and networks of the group. Notable about Bourdieu's explanation of social capital is that he indicates that every network has a spokesperson<sup>9</sup>. According to Bourdieu (1986:53), there is an agent who speaks on behalf of the group and represents the shared amount of social capital. Bourdieu calls these spokespersons the *nobiles* or the *noble* ('people who are known'). They are the embodiment and defenders of the group.

Concluding, the Bourdieuan perspective on social capital suggests there is a certain hierarchy within a network. There is a spokesperson, who is clearly more known than the others (based on the nicknames Bourdieu gives him) and who is summoned with the task to embody the whole group. He has the privileged position of representing the group. Another

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<sup>9</sup> This was previously discussed in Tulloch (1995), where he indicates there is an *executive fan* within each fan community, who can be seen as a spokesperson for the fan community.

reason to speak of a hierarchy within the group is that it seems that to gain more social capital it is necessary to add another person to the network who already possesses a lot of social capital already. This implies there are elites who decide who to include in the network. Certain people within the network seem privileged, and they might exclude others who are not rich in social capital themselves.

### 3.1.2 Putnam's social capital

Putnam (2000) claims that there is a major decline in social capital, because people do not participate in community life anymore. Before extending these thoughts later, this paragraph provides an explanation of the 'Putnamian' view on social capital.

In the Putnamian view social capital is the theory that suggests social networks have a value for society. Strong social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000:19). Social capital therefore refers to the connections among individuals, to their networks and to the norms of reciprocity and reliability that arise from them<sup>10</sup>. Putnam's main stance is that our lives are made more productive by (strong) social ties (2000:19). This also refers to social capital being a public and private good. The benefit that comes from strong social ties goes either to bystanders or (immediately) to the person making the investment. Putnam uses term *reciprocity* to describe this process of having mutual obligations within a network; which fosters norms of reciprocity which on the long term even make society more efficient. However, it is easy to criticize this thought, for it is only beneficial for those who belong in the network and the external effect (those who are excluded from the network) of this type of social capital may not be that positive.

Putnam (2000) divides social capital into two categories: bonding and bridging: Bonding social capital is inward-looking and reinforces identities and homogeneous groups. This is similar to Bourdieu's stance (1986) of enriching the social network one belongs to with people that bring along others with high social capital. Bridging entails an outward look that includes people across diverse social formations, which can be good to mobilize solidarity. Bonding social capital can be seen as glue: it shows strong in-group loyalty and strong ties, but which may also imply or cause exclusion.

The decline of social capital is the main worry of Putnam, which is shared by Jenkins (2006).

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<sup>10</sup> Reciprocity and trustworthiness/reliability also appeared in the definition of Coleman (1988).

Putnam (2000) bases his concern on a survey held in 1999, which indicated that two-thirds of US citizens said civic life was weakened. They argued there was more emphasis on the individual than on the community, while eighty percent wished for more focus on the community. A reason for this decline in social ties can be found in a process of social change, which is best described as the generation gap (Putnam, 2000:34). The *intracohort* process shows many individuals changing their habits and tastes in a similar direction simultaneously; the *intercohort* process shows a slower development, whereby different generations developing different tastes or habits, which change a society at slower pace, but not at an individual level. Less participation in social life is a generational, intercohort change, according to Putnam (2000:34).

Putnam (2000:48-58) tries to explain the decline from several angles; the weakened enthusiasm in civic participation (the level of enthusiasm is highest in Northern-European countries) is for instance partly to blame on the fact that there are lesser local headquarters of social movements or associations where members can physically meet up. Membership has become a 'card-carrying business'; it does not reflect actual involvement when subscription is enough to be a member of an organization. All participants are registered members, but that does not indicate how participatory they actually are. However, if we look at this from a fan community perspective, one could argue that fans also do not (always) meet up physically, nor need that meeting to be active members. They do have local websites on which they can engage, but also visit more internationally oriented websites. This might indicate an upcoming generational change that Putnam could not yet foresee in his research.

Another angle Putnam addresses is the topic of informal social connections. He categorizes two types of people to explain connections between individuals. There are *machers* who invest in formal contacts with organizations and are generally seen as good citizens, and there are *schmoozers* who are easy in informal conversation and communication, but who are less organized, more spontaneous and more flexible in involvement. The contemporary generation Americans are more *schmoozers* (friends) than *machers* (citizens). People still connect, but do so differently, more flexible for instance, though there is still a decline of schmoozing visible (Putnam, 2000:97). Putnam can be criticized on the examples he reviews. He looks at card-playing for instance, an activity done with friends or family (which he also criticizes himself on by stating traditional family ties and patterns have changed), but what about the option of card playing being replaced by online real life action playing with friends? Or what about playing a game of tennis on the Wii with family or

friends? People do not have to meet up physically anymore in order to be together.

Putnam argues these declines are partly to be blamed on of the rise of technology, especially TV (Putnam, 2000: 115). This indicates the rise of the screen society: the change from a conversing group to a watching group.

Putnam's vision is not explicitly negative. He also summarizes a few counter-trends that show a positive influence on the rise (or balance) of social capital (2000:148). Firstly he signifies the rise of encounter-groups based on emotional and social lives (smaller, informal communities), contradicted secondly by the rise of greater social movements. The third point of balance he points out is that of the explosive growth of computer-mediated-communication (CMC). Communication between groups via CMC forms and even substitutes relational ties that weakened in our fragmented society; CMC provides new ways of acquiring social capital and allows people with weak social ties to gain more social capital.

Media get an explicit role in Putnam's search for restoring social capital, especially the Internet:

Internet is virtual social capital. It is a simulacrum of social connectedness and civic engagement.

(Putnam, 2000:170)

There is no direct link between the decline of social cohesion and the rise of the Internet, for the first process had already set in before the second, according to Putnam (2000). He states that the internet is a reason for the breakdown of the more traditional forms of social capital, but also praises it for opening new options, as it is all about communicating and removing boundaries of time and space. CMC is less hierarchical, more participatory and less biased by status differences, but still one needs to reconsider the power of the internet, as not everyone has access or knows how to use it properly, as it is an individual medium and as non-verbal messages can have other meanings than intended.

Putnam thus argues there are four factors that 'killed' civic engagement: increasing amount of women on the labor market; social mobility; demographic changes, and technological changes that privatized leisure. It is important to note that Putnam (200:265) implies that (in 1998) a survey among freshman indicated that there was more volunteering activity than generations before showed. This fosters hope for the restoring of social capital and stronger community ties.

### 3.2 Bourdieu versus Putnam

The Bourdieuan and Putnamian views on social capital differ. This paragraph elaborates on the similarities and differences in their standpoints. Firstly the two descriptions of social capital can be combined into a brief definition: social capital is the way in which people are connected, or have built up a network within a larger community (drawing on Bourdieu, 1986, 2010 and on Putnam, 1995, 2000). Secondly, it can be inferred that these social connections imply that the more connections one has within the fandom, the more social capital.

A Putnamian approach considers social capital of citizens to be the backbone of willingness to participate in public debates. A decline in social capital of citizens can be a menace for a coherent society, because people lack the information to actively get involved in a political debate (Putnam, 2000). That implies that if the networks people possess become smaller and smaller, community life decreases and social cohesion declines too. Putnam (2000) sees community life as a smaller form of society and is afraid that if the decline will continue, the spirit to participate in politics (like social activism) and Politics (voting for parliament) will decrease. Consequently, Siisiäinen (2000) argues Putnam's concept of social capital draws on three pillars: moral obligations; social values, and social networks.

The Bourdieuan perspective is based on Bourdieu's concept of social capital and on his theoretical idea of class (Siisiäinen, 2000). His three types of capital should be seen as resources for class distinctions and, thus, create a hierarchical perspective. According to Siisiäinen (2000), the forms of capital become effective through the addition of symbolic capital. The Bourdieuan social capital, namely highlights conflicts and power functions. As a result, 'social capital should be understood as a resource in the social struggles that are carried out in different fields or social spheres' (Siisiäinen, 2000). This means, that one is dependent of his own network to overcome inequalities or other struggles. Again, this draws back to the hierarchy Bourdieu implies in his theories, for the higher one is within the network, the more secure he is of his position and of help of others within the network. The Putnamian concept states otherwise: social capital is the core of communal life, because it is linked to voluntary, collective action suggesting there may be a social network of citizens' activity. This makes the three pillars that Putnam names good resources for community life; trust (the main social value); moral obligations, and social networks themselves.

Putnam's view differs from Bourdieu when it comes to discussing the power relations in a community. Siisiäinen (2000) criticizes Putnam for neglecting the 'vertical dimensions' and power relations. Putnam wants everyone to have an equal position and be able to integrate

(with)in a community, not acknowledging leadership or rank-filed members that are higher in position and in relation to the outside world (the in- or exclusion from the organization to the outside world). Thus, Bourdieu recognizes class differences and declares there is a hierarchy within a community, while Putnam illustrates social capital from an integration perspective. Bourdieu sees society as a plurality of social fields; the forms of capital are factors defining positions and possibilities of the various actors in the different spheres. This indicates that differences in social capital could be a tool for social power to overcome struggles and inequality (Siisiäinen, 2000). Therefore, the Bourdieuan perspective includes the thought that social capital is a collective phenomenon, but also it is considered that this collectivity comes from the investments and strategies of individuals and still can be represented by a 'leader' or a higher-ranked member of the group (Siisiäinen, 2000). Siisiäinen (2000) calls Putnam's perspective therefore a 'romantic concept of selflessness', while Bourdieu hints at (negative) altruism (self-enrichment) and dominating others. Putting this simply, it can be argued that Putnam wants everyone to have an equal position, while Bourdieu states that the more authentic one is and the more one can offer, the higher he will be and the higher he will be ranked.

Siisiäinen (2000) provides a fitting conclusion to the Putnamian and Bourdieuan stances: Putnam looks at social capital from an *integration* perspective with the four factors (increasing number of women on labor market, social mobility, demographic changes and technological changes that privatized leisure, especially television) as reasons that are to blame for the decline of trust and participation in voluntary associations (which form the base of a consensus amongst people). Again, Putnam wishes for equality within the group. Bourdieu would see it from a *structural* angle: the welfare state is an achievement of social movements, but now globalization is used against that state in a neo-liberal discursive way, the consequences of that are that societies are growing more insecure and distressed. Therefore a certain group is privileged and another under-privileged, which leads to 'a struggle for power, forms of *Herrschaft* (domination) and deficiency' (Siisiäinen, 2000). The privileged is the authentic, who will gain more credit.

When looking at the two visions in relation to the concept of community construction, it can be concluded that both visions offer a characteristic related to social capital. It can be stated that Putnam's integration perspective highlights social capital as an attribute to a certain position, forming the characteristic (or indicator) 'Position'. This position can change over



time, but in the Putnamian perspective everyone starts out at the same level. The Bourdieuan perspective is structured, indicating there is a struggle for power and there is a group with privileges. If one holds more capital than another, that one is more authentic and thus higher in ranking which forms the indicator 'Authentic'.

### **3.3 Capital in relation to hierarchy in fandoms**

Position and Authenticity are not the only characteristics that form a part of social capital. And social capital is just one of the three types of capital<sup>11</sup> that were introduced by Bourdieu (1986). Shortly stated, social capital is the number of connections in a /or the network people maintain, which is based on a structural, hierarchical angle (Bourdieu, 1986). The other vision, as discussed before, entails the idea that social capital is related to a position in the process of integration (Putnam, 2000). To link the two characteristics Position and Authenticity as being part of social capital to the core of this thesis (namely how the Harry Potter fan community is constructed) the following paragraphs discuss the explorations of Hills (2002) and Jenkins (2006). Hills (2002) draws on Bourdieu to see how fan cultures relate to hierarchy and community and Jenkins (2006) illustrates that notion with his study of Survivor fans and their act of spoiling.

#### **3.3.1 Hills' approach to the concepts of capital**

Hills (2002) argues that Bourdieu approaches fan cultures from a social hierarchy perspective, and that the fan culture is not solely a community. He argues that fans share a mutual interest, but on the other hand they compete too; about knowledge, access (to others and producers and the object itself) and their reputation (Hills, 2002:46). The emphasis on the competition element within the fandom makes Hills describe fans as '*players*', a group that acknowledges its rules, but also tries to gather skill, knowledge and differences. Yet, Hills (2002:46) argues that Bourdieu lacks to succeed in explaining these moral struggles or the changing positions possible within the fan culture. Therefore, 'Playing' may be seen as the third indicator that characterizes social capital, for it critiques Bourdieu's stance. If a fan plays to gain more capital, his position can change. This suggests for instance that the fan can attain a privileged position or a more equal position than before.

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<sup>11</sup> As already shortly explained in section 2.3 and section 3.1 extended on the types of capital defined by Bourdieu.

As stated before, the Bourdieuan view can be seen as an economic approach to classify the types of capital. He relates the different amount of capital one can build up to a place in the class system. He hence distinguishes four types of groups similar to different ranks in society, which Hills (2002) also considers as a useful way to discuss a fandom.

Firstly, the upper-class; the dominating fraction of the bourgeoisie who would never consider calling themselves a fan; the second class; the dominated part of the bourgeoisie, would admit to like the same things, whether they are an artist or an intellectual, but they like it in ‘another, unique’ way; the third class is the *petit bourgeoisie*, they can recognize ‘real’ art, but do not possess enough credit to appreciate it fully, while the last class, the working class, is the ‘fan’ itself as they lack proper cultural and social power to get deeply involved with the arts.

However, these categories stratify groups beforehand and mainly use cultural capital (their knowledge and proper appreciation for the arts) as a fixed standard for belonging to a certain group. Social capital is undermined and is not considered as a reason or a means that could move people from one class to another class, nor that (sub)cultural capital can be gained during the process of changing classes or growing as a fan (accumulating more knowledge over the years). It also implies the sense of moral dualism, for which Hills (2002) warns continuously; a good fan is not a fan that has a great amount of capital, nor is a bad fan one who does not own a lot of capital. Assuming that the Bourdieuan distinction leaves out the thought fans can grow within a fandom, it could be argued that being a part of a fandom is being part of a *liquid community*. The liquid community does not enclose a fixed role division, but could contain certain levels and credits a fan can accumulate and grow into or out of by ‘playing’.

Again, Bourdieu’s notion, as interpreted by Hills (2002), is mainly about (sub)cultural capital. Hills (2002:56) provides two reasons why the notion of social capital is not often discussed in research: First, because cultural capital is so highly emphasized in Bourdieu’s work so social capital is undermined, and second because cultural capital is in line with the concerns of cultural critics<sup>12</sup>. It has to be noted that fandoms do not explicitly acknowledge a hierarchy themselves in their community. Another reason for not elaborating on hierarchy can be, as Hills (2002) himself argues, that cultural capital is easier to define.

Though, as Hills (2002) proposes, cultural capital and social capital are related. Through the act of playing, fans can gain more credit in capital and thereby expand their

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<sup>12</sup> Neither Fiske (1992), Thornton (1995), Jenkins (1992) nor MacDonald (1998) relate their fan studies to the concept of social capital or hierarchies in a fandom.

amount of capital. Social capital is ‘the network of friends and associates a fan possesses as well as their contact to media producers and professional staff linked with the object of fandom’ (Hills, 2002:57). A fan with high cultural capital will also possess high social capital (Hills, 2002:57), though it should be remarked that there could be ‘lurking fans’ that appear to have high cultural capital, but do not want to enunciatively participate or involve themselves in a fandom. In that way the fan will not have the chance to show its social capital, so this cannot be linked to it. Another point Hills addresses, drawing on Bourdieu, is the notion of symbolic capital (2002). Symbolic capital relies on knowledge and recognition, but can be seen as prestige or a certain amount of fame, constructed by the credit of others; these fans achieved a certain amount of recognition and authority within the community. Thus, a fan with high symbolic capital could also be the fan with the greatest amount of social capital (for he needs others to address that capital to him).

### **3.3.2 Jenkins’ approach to the concepts of capital**

Practices within a fan community can be related to democratic processes. If Bourdieu’s stance (1986) implies authenticity as an important feature of social capital, and thereby meaning that certain fans are privileged or ranked higher, this also leads to an opposing view. Jenkins (2006) defines this oppositional view as the process of ‘Othering’. Jenkins (2006) calls the ‘spoiling’ of Survivor fans an example of such a process. It entails the act of play<sup>13</sup>, for these fans own certain information which they leak within the fan community to share, or just for their own pleasure. These ‘executive fans’ within the Survivor community hold a great amount of social capital. This may lead to the Othering of fellow fans, by measuring their amount of capital and seeing that as the norm, though Jenkins does not state it explicitly (2006:33). In the Survivor fandom Jenkins discovered two fans who hold a lot of symbolic, cultural and social capital: Wezzie and Dan are two spoiler fans that rank high in status, based on their immense knowledge of locations where Survivor is filmed, and their connections with other fans and staff of the show (Jenkins, 2006:34). They have a great influence within the fandom and this implies they have a great amount of these types of capital.

Jenkins implies (2006:38-39) that within the Survivor community ‘secret’ societies have emerged where fans gather that have high social capital and cultural capital; they try to gather these executive fans in so called ‘brain trusts’. The existence of such a group could be

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<sup>13</sup> Playing fans, as discussed by Hills (2002) in 3.3.1.

considered a sign of hierarchy within a fan community. The group is criticized for trying to establish an 'elite' that has access to information unavailable to the group as a whole and that demands to be trusted as arbiters of what is appropriate to share with the collective: they are the gatekeepers and the experts and have the right to cut out 'lower classes' (Jenkins, 2002: 39). They do seem to set the agenda for other fans, an act addressed to executive fans. This is similar to Bourdieu's notion (2010) of the four categories based on the class system. The elite fans are the dominating bourgeoisie and the lower classes are the working class or dominated classes. Although these elites may rank high on cultural capital, their social capital can decline, because they suddenly are members of an exclusive group. That might also cause their symbolic capital to lower, because they position themselves 'higher' and dominating, instead of sharing and befriending. Bourdieu's concept highlights certain privilege the 'elites' have, whereas Jenkins wishes the ideal social capital to be more as Putnam (2010) envisions it: a great network where everyone is on the same level.

Returning to the idea that fan communities can show aspects of a micro democracy, Jenkins (2006) includes another example of the Survivor community. He illustrates two groups: the *absolutists* and the *relativists*, who both struggle over the 'realness' of a fan (who is more authentic). These discussions over trust and knowledge are 'exercises in popular epistemology', evaluating and knowing or things to work through within the community and later on to be translated into a 'real' democratic process (Jenkins, 2006:44). This discussing and evaluating might not always lead to a shared consensus, but a loose one might be all that is reached, for the members of a community are diverse, but sometimes beliefs are common and accepted by everyone, forming a suitable example for the micro-democracy (Jenkins, 2002). These elements (discussion, sharing a consensus) are the base for community construction (Baym, 1999).

It might be argued that the executive fans are elites, or Bourdieu's *nobiles*, for they also hold a certain amount of expertise, which makes them popular among others. Drawing on Walsh's notion of 'the expert paradigm', Jenkins (2006:52) tries to explain how assumptions about expertise are changing: In the open communication process of the Internet experts can find each other more easily and acquire more social capital by befriending other experts. This could create another in- or out-group; those who possess knowledge and those who do not. This can be considered the fourth indicator of social capital, namely Othering: excluding Others who have less capital or are considered 'lesser' fans than the one stating it.

The aspects of position, authenticity and playing have been highlighted thus far in relation to community construction. This paragraph introduced the concept of Othering: the negative aspect that these features bring along within community construction. The alienating of other fans and thus their in- or exclusion from a group, is dependent on how authentic the fan is within the community<sup>14</sup>. However, Hills (2002) indicates this might be a sign of moral dualism, for a fan is a 'good fan' or 'the Other'. This measures one's own cultural practices against others (their amount of capital against others) and it vindicates their practices against those who are already in the fandom (which could again indicate there are distinctions within the fandom) (Hills, 2002: 61). This could also be seen in Jenkins' approach to the concepts of capital.

It can be stated that the concepts of capital are not fixed, but changeable. These liquid relations are a pre-condition for the relationship between the different concepts. Position, playing, authenticity and Othering are concepts that play a role in the construction of the community, but are changeable like the community itself. The participation and involvement in fan communities is voluntary, they do not ask for staying longer or gathering a certain amount of capital to belong to a group. They do not ask for fulfilling goals in order to be a member, but offer a site where one can invest or show their emotional and intellectual affection for an object.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The definitions of Bourdieu and Putnam on social capital differ, but also display some parallels. Both agree on the idea of social capital existing of playing a part in a community, consciously or unconsciously. Whereas Bourdieu provides a distinction between a group of privileged fans, the nobles, and the ones that are excluded, or 'Othered' for not 'being real' fans. The Putnamian concept also postulates the apt idea of social capital as integration process; earning a place within a network. Hills develops this by stating fans are 'players' that use certain elements to gain a spot within a network (which they also can move out of). They 'play' and thus change positions, which makes them more equal within the network. So, one can gain authenticity in one field (for a while), but can have none in another field.

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<sup>14</sup> Authenticity is a point that Jancovich focuses on (2002) in his research about cult movie fandoms. He states (2002:307) that authenticity shows how it 'works' in the field, by which he means that it is used to create divisions among fans within the group, but also to the outside world. This could relate to (sub)cultural capital and social capital: for a fan that does hold a great amount of knowledge, perhaps gains respect easier from other fans than a lurker<sup>14</sup> or a newbie.

Social capital is considered a main concept in community construction. Summarizing this chapter, it introduced four characteristics of social capital that are related to community construction. The following four features are identified as characteristics; Position (elites/ nobles/ in-group versus out-group); Authenticity (which can be based on symbolic capital); Othering and 'Playing'. These four indicators form the backbone of the exploration of community construction in the fandom: All fans have a certain position within the fandom. The privileged group can be seen as more authentic and Other fellow fans. Others can play and become privileged fans, for a while, or just play at the same level as other fans, but are 'elited' by means of symbolic capital. To discover how the community is constructed and how social capital plays a role within that, four indicators are identified as aspects contributing to the concept of social capital. Thus, social capital within this thesis is defined as:

the acquired number of connections; the position the person takes up within the group (a person can be privileged or seen as the Other, besides fitting in the in-group), and the amount of symbolic capital one has gathered (which indicates the level of authenticity). Social capital is not a fixed type of capital, for one can 'play' (change positions) and therefore change his or her amount of capital; it is a liquid concept.

## 4. Methodology: “I solemnly swear I’m up to no good” (Harry)

Social capital is, as argued before in this thesis, considered to be a great factor in community construction. After discussing different views of the concept, four characteristics or identifiers are deducted: Position (elites/nobiles/in-out group), Authenticity, Othering and ‘Playing’. It must be remarked that social capital is a *liquid* concept; a fan can play, so might show several indicators that form or characterize a certain type of capital. The identifiers are made up of several elements, or patterns, that are discussed in this chapter. This chapter deals with the choice for the Harry Potter fandom and the selection of data within that fandom. Furthermore, it provides a short recap of the concepts and a description of the two methods applied to the data. The two methods used to explore how social capital and thereby community construction are present within the Harry Potter fandom are a discourse analysis of online comments posted by fans on fan news-websites and interviews with fans. Hence, brief illustrations of (a systematic) discourse analysis and interviewing as methods of data analysis are included.

### 4.1 Harry Potter fan communities

The Harry Potter books and films have, after their first appearance in 1997 and 2001, gained an international status and its fandom is still active. For the ‘younger’ generation’ this fandom is comparable to the established fandom like Star Wars or Star Trek. Jenkins’ (2006) examples of ‘Pottermania’ support this view: he compares Potter-fans, who came into a fight with Warner Bros over a movie-adaption of the books, to the Star Wars franchise<sup>15</sup>. He also mentions wizard rock, bands inspired by Harry Potter, who can be compared to Star Trek fans who have their own ‘filking’ gatherings. Harry Potter already has a theme park, whereas Star Wars has venues within several Disney Worlds.

Apart from all these features of the fandom, there is also a lively fan fiction community, which overruled the number of Star Trek stories and there is a Harry Potter Alliance, which makes people in the ‘real world’ more aware of slumbering disasters (Jenkins, 2006). And maybe the most important factor of all to choose Harry Potter fans as a

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<sup>15</sup> Shefrin (2004) addresses this ‘fight’ in her paper: she argues Star Wars fans offered George Lucas storylines, like the Harry Potter fans did to producer Warner Bros. Except the Harry Potter fans got more respect and wish fulfillment than the Star Wars fans.

subject, is because the fandom involves everyone: adults, children, male and females and therefore can be seen as a small society itself (Jenkins, 2006:216).

#### 4.1.1 The community as a cult?

The Harry Potter fandom does not seem as exclusive as a cult fandom. A fandom can provide a surrogate for interpersonal relations and makes them, especially in a cult, a very close group (Hills, 2002:126). In a cult fandom a fan belongs to the community if they know how to talk and behave within the fandom, almost with the character of a religious group (Hills, 2002). Yet, Hills does not want to call it a religion, but a *neo-religiosity* in which the ‘cult’ discourses (religious-related) are a part of the community (2002:126). The discourse of fans is important for the inclusion or exclusion of them in the fandom (Hills, 2002). This closeness is partly based on the discourse in the fandom, for fans show a certain understanding and knowledge<sup>16</sup>, and know how to rationalize their object of fandom to each other and perhaps others in their own chosen language.

Another aspect of the cult fandom is fans’ ‘endless’ debate about the narrative of their object of fandom (Hills, 2002). This shows their enormous devotion and struggle for control about a part of the media text. According to Hills (2002), this could also be typed as a neo-religious aspect. This is visible in the Harry Potter fandom<sup>17</sup>, but the fans are rather mild in correcting the film producers and show respect for the writer of the books J.K. Rowling. As long as she approves the changes, they will approve too. That shows the fandom is not as exclusive as a cult fandom.

#### 4.1.2 Data selection within the fandom

There are a lot of Harry Potter fan websites online. Two interesting and comparable sites focus on all subjects related to Harry Potter (from the movie releases, private lives of the actors to fan fiction authors and stories) namely Mugglenet.com (internationally oriented) and Dreuzels.com (the Dutch version of Mugglenet.com). Picking a global and a local website lends itself for a comparison between a worldwide fan-base and a more local based community (or at least language-dependent). Putnam (1995, 2000) argues in Northern European countries, like the Netherlands show a smaller decline in social capital. Though the

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<sup>16</sup> Like Jenkins (1992) and Rogozinska (2007) argue as well, it is important for new fans, who want to be included in the groups, that they understand the preferred reading of the group and sometimes even participate in challenging the producers, for example by writing different endings or pairings in fan fiction.

<sup>17</sup> See Shefrin (2004).



communities used in this thesis are not bound by geographical limits, for the websites are worldwide accessible. The Dutch example, however, might be supportive for this theory.

Firstly, to explore community construction and social capital within the fandom, a content analysis is performed. The content analysis is conducted on news comments and posts related to the release of deleted scenes of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (the seventh movie) and the pre-screening of its sequel. On Mugglenet.com this means that there are 966 comments to analyze (collected via three postings on the releases until the beginning of April). Dreuzels.com offers 92 comments related to news about the release of deleted. This means 1058 comments are analyzed. Secondly, interviews are held with nine fans and a boy scout. The fans are approached via a post on Mugglenet and Dreuzels.com. This should lead to a variety of age groups and countries of origin. The boy scout's interview will be used as means of comparison, for Putnam (2000) states that the community of boy scouts is nowadays one of the few strong, active communities.

## **4.2 Community Construction and identifiers for social capital**

To explore the presence of community construction and social capital in the online fan-messages and interviews, it needs to be clear how these subjects are defined. First of all, to understand how a community is constructed, it is useful to see how the concept is defined. Baym (1999:200) offers an apt definition:

Community construction: an ongoing creation, manifested, challenged and recreated through negotiations that occur implicitly in every message. As people write, they draw selectively on the features of the medium, the joint projects available, their personal histories and experiences, and the group's history in ways that collaboratively co-construct the values, relationships identities and conventions that make a group feel like a community.

It is clear here that the community will show itself within the fan discourse (or as Baym, 1999:200, states 'negotiations that occur in a message'), hence the choice to perform a discourse analysis on the research material. Silverman (2005) defines discourse by means of De Saussure's (1974) view: a discourse is a system of relations between individual words (signs) and their meaning, which they derive only from their relation and differences within the sign-system.

Performing a discourse analysis means investigating the raw, non-moderated material where the discourse may be found. Widdowson (2007) calls the negotiations in the data

‘(internal) mechanisms’, or ‘mechanisms that are under influence of internal and external relations’, as they are defined by Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999:37). This means there are references back and forth and that discourse within a text shows how structure and reason are created. Barker (1981) sees discourse as a social practice, by which he means that discourse is central to the reproduction of society. Social changes, processes and structure can be reflected by language or speech in texts. It can be argued that this in line with Baym’s (1999) statement that a group is constructed by means of co-constructing values (semiotics), identities (relations and connections) and conventions (activities and politics).

Every ‘text’ is assessed on a few basic identifiers (name and if available on the forum: country, number of posting, status on forum, number of friends) and the factors that make up social capital and can help to illustrate the connections within the fandom: Position, Othering, Authenticity and Playing.<sup>18</sup>

These identifiers include different factors that in total make up social capital. To find these indicators the raw material will be assessed on the following identifiers:

1) Position within the fandom: what position does the fan hold, according to him or others? The fan can be an elite or nobile: This is a fan that everyone will know within the fandom, but it does not immediately mean this fan is popular (therefore it is necessary to look at the way the fan himself talks, but also how he is addressed by other fans). Because this thesis explores the publicly (accessible), but moderated websites, it could be that a moderator is for example brought up as an elite. In the next example ‘Eric’ (first-name base addressing) to which the fan refers is one of the moderators of Mugglenet, thus well-known within the community:

Posted by: butterbeer\_bottle - Posted on: 2011-04-02 15:26:02

Awesome! **Why do I think that it was Eric who got to attend it again :)** Hope we can get some details about this soon!

Another element to deduct is the presence of an in-out group. Are there fans that feel highly involved with the fandom and show a consequent choice of words which suggest in- or exclusion or do fans try to create a ‘we-feeling’? In the following example this is illustrated with the choice of words for ‘HP fans!’, by which the fans addresses the total group of fans:

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<sup>18</sup> The codebook, which includes examples of the identifiers, can be found in appendix A.

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-04-02 15:38:20

[...] **Cherish this HP fans!** For this is the last time **we** get to re-imagine scenes before they Happen.. It's truly the End of an Era :(

Some fans may consider other fans as 'less' of a fan or they make (negative) remarks about people outside the fandom. This is related to the second identifier 'Othering':

2) Othering: entails how fans discuss and 'exclude' people that are 'not as much of a fan as they are'. This can be visible for example with the terms of 'moviegoers', 'non-readers', 'general audience': All these forms indicate that the fan sees the others not as 'fan'. In their discourse it can be deducted that they consider themselves as better fans. So the process of Othering can happen at several levels; it can either happen outside the fandom or between the fans themselves. In the next example the term movie-goers is used to suggest that fans who only see the movies have less capital and therefore need more explanation about the scene (which deviates from the book):

Posted by: ginmo - Posted on: 2011-04-01 09:18:37

THAT WAS THE CUUUUUUTEST SCENE EVER!! **Too bad they couldn't put it in, because it would give more evidence to their relationship for the movie-goers**, but I understand why they cut it. It probably didn't flow right with the movie. I'm just thankful they filmed such a cute scene and put it on the DVD.

Another level is the relationship between the movie producers (David Yates) and production company that is behind the movies (Warner Brothers) and the fans. The example illustrates how fans give off at the industry, for the producers adapt the story so it becomes appropriate for the movie, but this might differ from the reading fans have:

Posted by: AndrewW - Posted on: 2011-04-02 22:58:28

There are so many complaints I have with WB (ed: Warner Brothers) and the movie makers after this review and seeing all the previous movies. [...] **All WB\* has ever cared about is getting the maximum amount of money possible from the movies.** It has ALWAYS come before making a good movie. **The best example was OotP (ed: Order of the Phoenix). David Yates said he made a 3 hour movie but "HAD TO" cut an hour. They same thing is happening again.** I thought they were going to do Deathly Hallows **right but they even screwed that up now.**

An extra stage, is the fans who want spoilers and who do not want to receive or read them. Between the fans there is a distinction between these groups, and those who do not understand why others want to be spoiled, tend to give off at these fans for not being real:

Posted by: iwantorlando05 - Posted on: 2011-04-03 08:55:53

**Why do some of you want to be spoiled?! I'm steering clear** this time around.[...]

It can also be shown in their knowledge of Harry Potter related subjects, which is related to the concept of symbolic capital, which in its place is connected to the third factor:

3) Authenticity: is based on how much symbolic capital the fan gains from other fans and how authentic he himself thinks he is/ is considered by others. This is also based on their own knowledge, thus their own capital. A fan that saw all the movies, read all the books and knows even about private information of the actors or JK Rowling may score high on this indicator. In this illustration, it is shown by a fan showing off detailed facts no one else knows or by correcting other fans (this fan even shows his knowledge on the books and the movies):

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-04-02 14:39:44

@Grasper.. Well that's the WHOLE problem and weakness about Voldemort... **He's too Arrogant! So he always thinks ver Little of Harry as if he's that easy. If he is, why hasn't Voldy killed him Yet! Lol**

Someone like Voldemort would definitely think Harry Potter would try and sneak back to Hogwarts... **because think about it Grasper.. Voldy has NO CLUE that Dumbledore and Harry knew about the Horcruxes. So at this point, he thinks he's got the Whole World in his finger tips, and all Potter can do is run and hide.**

Fans will not always show this behavior, for as stated before, social capital is a liquid concept, Authenticity is liquid as well, because fans 'play'. They mingle to help others and make them understand something or they 'play' to gain more capital and a more authentic position;

4) Playing: shows how liquid social capital can be; fans sometimes prefer to show (some) knowledge, while others lurk. Some fans are very active at the beginning of a topic and calm down later on and some keep returning and post consequently. Playing is not just about participation, but also about gaining capital and showing capital in the fandom. This could be done by asking questions, but also sharing an opinion ('I think'), as illustrated:

Posted by: hermionegranger25 - Posted on: 2011-03-17 17:43:07

**Did I see Mr and Mrs Weasley hunched over what appears to be Fred's dead body? I'm watching the low quality youtube versions, and it was only a split second, but I paused and I think it is....** That's going to be such a horrifying sequence!

Online data offers a lot of material, but not all data will be appropriate to illustrate the identified patterns in the material. Silverman (2004) defines deviant cases as cases which do not follow the expected pattern or show elements of the suggested pattern. Therefore it is important to explore the phenomenon itself and not its environment, which appears to be a possible trap when performing an analysis on data (Silverman, 1997). Though, deviant cases can help sharpen the theoretical clearness of the analysis for they include another pattern, so the 'wanted' pattern is reinforced and constructed clearer and sharper (Silverman, 2004).

### 4.3 Interviews

By conducting interviews it becomes clear what fans themselves consider as important topics

within the community. It also shows how close the community is and how fans feel within the community. The interviews are explored for how fans give meaning to their fandom and how they participate (how they build up their cultural capital and how much they possess) and their ways of engagement (networking, thus social capital). Thus, the interviews are used to see what fans themselves want to put on the agenda of the community or consider important elements of the community and community-life. The interviewees were approached via the webforums belonging to Mugglenet.com and Drezels.com. They were called upon via a forum messages. Participants from several countries, age groups and backgrounds agreed to be interviewed in person/ via Skype or answered an extensive online questionnaire.

For ‘measuring’ the fan community against a, according to Putnam (2000), very close community - namely the scouts - a boy scout is interviewed. This interview offers material to compare the fan community to. With the help of a discourse/content analysis of the interviews the fandom and the fans’ involvement is explored. The sequence in which the data is embedded cannot be neglected, for that would mean that only anecdotes are illustrative (Silverman, 2004). According to Silverman (2005), the strength of working with qualitative analyses is that it is naturally-occurring data that looks at *how* participants construct a meaning about *what* is set up. This means that a quote may be used as an illustration, but the complete interview counts as its context. This also provides the focus of the interviews conducted for this thesis; they will not be used as confirmations of the web-research, but will be used to see what fans themselves put on their agendas as important issues within the fandom.

Conducting interviews online and offline is a fruitful way to combine the use of Internet media with more traditional measures (Kazmer & Xie, 2008:257). Kazmer and Xie (2008:258) argue that this is especially the case for research that explores an internet-based activity, such as participating in an online community, where the participants are already comfortable with the online interaction. In that way, they argue (2008:259), the interviews preserve more ‘contextual naturalness’; the interviews take place in the same setting as in which the participants normally connect. Silverman (2005) calls this, as mentioned before, naturally-occurring data. The data retrieved online from interviewees may be richer and more personal, which makes the digital form an addition to the traditional setting, but it raises challenges too (Murthy, 2008:842-849). Evans and Mathur (2005) listed advantages and disadvantages of conducting interviews online or offline. They state the global reach, speed and timeliness, controlled sampling and flexibility for instance as strengths, while potential

weaknesses are the unclear answering instructions, privacy issues, lower response rates and the impersonal character of the questionnaire. Some of the strengths are reasons to work with online interviewing in this thesis, like the global reach of fans, the speed and timeliness which overcomes time zones and the controlled sampling (it is possible, to just find a certain group of Harry Potter fans instead of a broad population). The questionnaire belonging to this thesis focused on participants/ interviewees addressed via Mugglenet.com or Drezels.com and via the 'snow-ball effect'. This is according to Murthy (2008) another advantage of online interviewing. Besides overcoming the difficulties of different time zones and scheduling conflicts, complications can be found too; users stop using their email, use it inconsistently or disconnect (Kazmer and Xie, 2008:262). Recruiting interviewees via a forum may also show these difficulties, for users stop returning to the message board, read it, but forget about it or do not have the time to participate (though, this occurs in offline interviewing as well).

Two major advantages that count when conducting interviews online is that they are self-transcribing (the interaction is even double-documented) and there are no 'background' noises or distractions recorded (Kazmer and Xie, 2008:265). To prevent that the transcriptions rotate amongst other fans or other possible interviewees, participants can see the questionnaire online on the message board and are asked to answer in private. This also guarantees the privacy of the interviewees, an aspect that is partially lost when interviewing in real life, because then the interviewee and interviewer interact act in a synchronous method (Kazmer and Xie, 2008). The downside of online interviewing is that there are no facial expressions to analyze and it does not provide an insight in the thought process of the interviewees (Kazmer and Xie, 2008:269). Though these thoughtful moments can be indicated by dots (for instance ...) and offline thoughtful moments make spoken data sometimes incoherent when transcribing. Kazmer and Xie (2008) argue data is more difficult to structure when it is conducted online, for there is no assembled format in which participants contribute. To prevent this from happening, interviewees are asked to answer extensively and questions are structured clearly after a few test cases. In the interviews that will be conducted offline these processes will be more visible.

What counts for both manners of interviewing, online and offline, is to exchange affective data (Kazmer and Xie, 2008:271). This can be done by indicating the aca-fan and fan-academic stance of Jenkins (1992). Indicating the interviewer has a certain knowledge about Harry Potter and is familiar with the fandom may cause interviewees to be more relaxed and more willingly to participate. It is not necessary to lurk on a forum for this thesis, though

it is necessary to show familiarity with the rules and settings of the environment of the interviewees. As indicated before (by Kazmer and Xie, 2008, and Silverman, 2005) this will provide the most natural looking data samples. The interview with the scout is slightly different from the other interviews and necessary to conduct in person, for the questionnaire is deviant and the information is less familiar with the subjects presented in this thesis. Again, this interview is conducted not to confirm certain stances, but to see what topics are important for the members of a community and what they themselves put on the agenda of the community and community-life.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

This thesis entails a content analysis on news comments and interviews with community members. The two methods provide a qualitative look at the Harry Potter fandom and how community construction is realized within that fandom. Although both methods have advantages and disadvantages, as listed in this chapter, they will be able to perform an extensive analysis in which the discourse of fans is a focus point. As discussed within the chapter and suggested with the examples included, the web-material is used, because it provides raw, unmoderated data and shows the ongoing negotiations of community construction. According to Baym (1999) the process is ongoing and lies in the negotiations of the fans. The websites chosen, Mugglenet.com and Drezels.com offer comparative data, for the first is accessible worldwide, while the other side is language-bound to Dutch-speaking Harry Potter fans. The interviews are included, because they reveal what the community member themselves consider important factors within the fandom.

The analysis in the next chapter is performed with help of the four characteristics identified as features of social capital; Position, Authenticity, Othering and Playing. Thereby, patterns or elements that occur within these positions were deducted. These elements make up the four indicators and are elements within the ongoing process of community construction.

## 5. Results: “She'll only believe in things as long as there's no proof at all” (Hermione)

To see how community construction and social capital are present within the fandom, a content analysis is performed on two websites related to Harry Potter and interviews with fans are conducted. In the web-based research a systematic, qualitative content analysis was conducted on 1058 comments of news messages. 966 Messages came from Mugglenet.com and 92 were taken from Dreuzels.com. Of the 966 Mugglenet.com messages analyzed 291 were replies to other messages and 675 were stand-alone messages. At Dreuzels.com the 92 messages were comments related to news messages: five of these were replies, 87 were stand-alone comments. Both data-samples were analyzed for the four indicators related to social capital: Position, Othering, Authenticity and Playing. These factors had to be subdivided into several elements that appeared as patterns in the identifiers during the research. Perhaps due to the smaller sample not all elements could be retrieved in the Dreuzels.com data, as will become clear when illustrating the results.

Every indicator is discussed separately for Mugglenet.com and Dreuzels.com, except for the first paragraph, which shows an introduction to the fandom. Afterwards, the indicators are summarized separately for the websites. Graphs are used to illustrate the qualitative research, but it must be remembered this thesis does *not* focus on quantitative data. The presented results are not tested on significance, the graphs are meant to give a quick, illustrative overview to get a clearer picture of the different indicators. The last paragraphs contain results from the interviews and a conclusion.

### 5.1 Acquired connections: Direct replies within Mugglenet.com and Dreuzels.com

The first factor analysed is the amount of ‘visible’ direct replies. This could be defined as a clear indication of answering or responding to another commentator on the message. For example:

Posted by: AccioPotter - Posted on: 2011-04-01 13:20:22

@tarte--good reasoning! Didn't think of that before now, but it makes sense.

The @ stands for ‘at’, indicating a direct reply. The Mugglenet-messages contained 291 direct replies; Dreuzels had 5. This is respectively 30,1% of the total amount of Mugglenet-



messages and 5,4% out of the DreuZels-postings. Within this population it was striking to notice that a small group was really active in posting and replying. Most posts were ‘stand-alone messages’ (indicating how great the new deleted scene was in a simple comment), but small discussions could be noticed. However, the top commentators were not always the ones that received the most replies. Some spoiler fans appeared in the comment sections and easily gained attention from other fans. To support this, below a list of top commentators and top receivers:

**Table 1: Overview of top positions in commenting or receiving comments**

	Top commentators	Replies made	Top receivers	Replies received
<b>1</b>	Phoenixmaster	28	General	58
<b>2</b>	AdamPotter123	16	Phoenixmaster	22
<b>3</b>	Ginny901	15	AdamPotter123	9
<b>4</b>	Winkyxx/ Zack D	9	Zack D & Sujay_22jan	7
<b>5</b>	Pottermusictreelover	6	Viraled/Mugglenet/Peverellforever/ Zack D	6
<b>6</b>	Bellablackk/srihardc/ mahdain/peverellforever	5	Winkyxx/iwantorlando05/ theHarryPotterGirl	5

Phoenixmaster appears to be an active member, for he does not only comment on others, but also receives most comments in the news sections. The term general, the top position in the received list, stands for comments with a general tone (‘come on guys’, ‘HP-fans’, ‘snape fans’). Although Ginny901, Winkyxx and Pottermusictreelover appear in the list of top commentators, they do not appear in receiving the most comments list (except for Winkyxx, respectively they gained 4, 5 and 3 comments). This could be caused for the ‘stand-alone’ replies they made; just commenting one person in one message, which gives them a high position as commentator. These results, however, support the thought that discussion takes place within the fans that post in the news section. On the Dutch website DreuZels.com there are fewer posters. It seems as if they are a closer group, because the same people keep appearing. In the total amount of 92 messages, 9 are posted by Sander Postema, 7 written by

Anieck, Ward posted 5, HP-fan added four (they form nearly one third of the total; 27,1%) and all of them are spread out over the four analyzed topics. Anieck was the one making the most replies, namely two of them. It shows, however, that the Dutch-speaking forum members know each other:

My First reaction about this scene with Hermione & Ron: KAREN GOES CRAZY!!! Hahaa, GO Karen, run after him! I really think they should have kept in the scene with the Dudleys, the others are idd nice as extra's.\*<sup>19</sup>  
Wicked – 3 Apr 2011 om 16:20

In the First line ‘Wicked’ states that Karen will go crazy because of the new scene of Ron and Hermione they posted. This indicates that Wicked knows Karen is a Ron-fan and will love this new scene. It is confirmed by Karen herself, in the message she posted straight after:

LOL:P And I try to constrain myself so hard in the news comments ^^ But secretly I think:  
DAMN RUPERT IS HOT! :O  
Karen - 3 Apr 2011 om 18:02

Karen states she is trying to constrain herself for not commenting and swooning too much over Ron in the news messages she posts on the website (apparently she is a moderator of Dreuzels.com). So, she confirms Wicked was right and knows her as a fan. This is illustrative for the Dreuzels.com comments: within the reply messages there is a strong sense of that these posters know each other, for they address each other in personal ways and on personal matters (like Karen having a crush on Ron).

## 5.2 Position within the fandom

To find out how the community is constructed, it is worth looking at what the discourse of fans tells about their positions. As defined before, position is about the status or role a fan entitles himself or is entitled by other fans. A fan can be placed or seen as ‘higher’ in rank than other fans (called ‘nobiles’ in the Bourdieuan sense). Another element is that fans can talk about ‘we’ or ‘us’, by which they mean the fandom itself and the group they feel they belong to (or the place they take in within this group, like shippers or spoiler-fans). Fights are another element within the indicator Position. They can occur as well among fans, as excluding themselves from a certain group. The last element is the referral to other websites, which shows that they see the fandom as a larger part than Mugglenet.com or Dreuzels.com alone and thereby not favor a specific website.

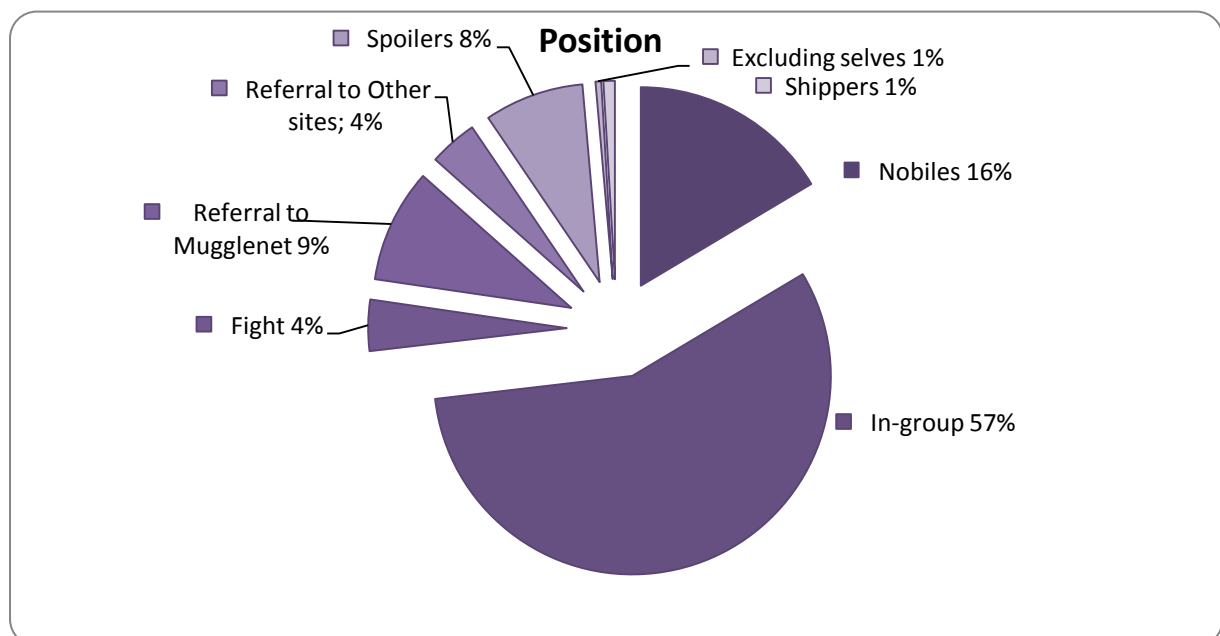
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<sup>19</sup> \*All translations of the Dutch comment and interview phrases in this chapter are done by the author. Original comments are in Dutch and can be found in Appendix C.

### 5.2.1 Position within Mugglenet.com

In 38,7% (n=374) of the Mugglenet-posts a comment about position could be found. 19,3% were stand-alone messages and 64,6% can be discovered within a reply-post. Within these posts several levels can be identified: A fan can be a 'nobile' (an elite or privileged), a fan can create an 'in-group' by talking about his fellows as 'we' or 'us', but fights happen too within the fandom. Fans can also be ranked higher, because they leak spoilers or they can privilege another site instead of Mugglenet. These factors were discovered in the exploration of the data and will now be dealt with separately to give a clearer vision of the community and how it is constructed. Graph 5.1.2 indicates the statistics about the found data:

**Graph 5.2.1: Position within the fandom, based on:**



**Note: n= 374 (total amount of message that contain levels of position)**

The in-group, or we-feeling of the group shows in 65,5% of the messages that are indicated as comments that entail an element of position. This shows the fans posting in the news sections feel related or refer to each other in their discourse with 'we' or 'us':

Posted by: mugglefan1 - Posted on: 2011-04-01 16:49:08  
 yes!!!! first to comment...EVER. i really like the deleted scenes...except for the fact that they are just that: deleted. **i think** all of the scenes should have stayed in the movie, **no matter how long we would have to sit in the cushioned chairs of the theatre.** haha :]

Mugglefan1's post signifies the use of the word 'us': 'I think all of the scenes ... no matter how long we would have to'; by switching to this 'we' he shows that he thinks about the fandom as a group, that all shares the same passion and the same excitement for the movie.

This gives an indication the fans think of themselves as a group with a shared object of interest, just as this example shows the switch from the ‘I’ to ‘we’:

Posted by: Amy<3sHP - Posted on: 2011-04-02 17:24:24

Two hours is graaaand!!! **Everyone needs to calm down!!!** Think about it, ootp - was the shortest movie, also the longest book...now DH:2 is roughly that same amount of time and it's even less than half of a shorter book than ootp!!! **We've gotten luckier!!** As long as they give those last chapters justice, does it really matter if it's half an hour shorter than the other films? Personally I'd be mory annoyed by them screwing up The Princes Tale or The Flaw in the Plan. **I can't believe this is the last time we can do this.** <3

Another element of discourse that entails the position in the group is to refer to the shared knowledge of fans:

Posted by: tazdevil1213 - Posted on: 2011-03-17 19:15:50

The sneak peek was AMAZING!! I think they showed the right amount, **just enough to satisfy us fans**. Oh and to the people complaining that they showed too much by showing Fred's death, **we fans knew he was going to die, and the only reason we knew it was his scene was only through looking over the scene multiple times**. People that were seeing the clip for the first time with no background would not have given the scene a second look. [...]

Tazdevil1213 clearly refers to his or her fellow fans as ‘us’ and ‘we fans’, which creates a strong ‘in-group’. In a certain way she excludes ‘lesser’ fans as well, for she also states, ‘the people complaining that they showed too much’, which indicates that she makes a difference between those who read the books and those who did not. Because she includes the book-readers in the in-group, she thus sees the community not just as a place where interest, but knowledge too, is shared.

Besides this slight hint of exclusion which will be discussed more deeply in the next paragraph, another way of creating an in-group showed in the discourse of ‘agreeing’; many fans posted messages in which they refer to comments stated by other members and which they agreed to:

Posted by: kapuffy26 - Posted on: 2011-04-01 11:11:20

It was a good scene; the acting felt very tangible. I wouldn't doubt it was unscripted and mostly improv. However, **I do agree with many of you that this scene would have felt clunky if it was left in**. They needed to establish Ron's jealousy of Harry and Hermione's relationship prior to him leaving, and adding this in somewhere before he storms off would have seemed very out-of-place and contrived. Regardless, it was a nicely acted scene, **and you could tell Rupert and Emma were pulling out elements of their own personalities** to make it more their own. Good stand-alone.

Comments like these point out that the fans agree with each other on their mutual interest. According to Baym (1999), the negotiation that occurs in community construction is visible in the fact that the fans agree on a subject concerning their mutual object of interest.

A whole other element in the indicator Position is the position of the Nobile, or the possible

elite fan that everyone knows. Though the highest percentage of the group position was scored on the we-feeling, the Nobile is second best: 19% of the messages have a Nobile element. Firstly, this can be shown in addressing a specific fan by its surname, as if the fan is known by everyone. Secondly, this element is closely related to spoiler fans (who get privileged or elited by other fans) and referrals to Mugglenet's position. The first factor, a fan being privileged by another fan is visible in the following example:

Posted by: AdamPotter123 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 18:47:08  
**BellaBlackk** you're welcome! :) **I reposted it from RandyBoyyz though, thank him!**

Bellablack apparently thanked AdamPotter123 already, but he got his information from RandyBoyyz, so he gives the credits to him and does not claim it for himself. In this act of noble behavior, he does not pose himself on a foot, but he lets Randy take full credit for it. Some fans also credit themselves for having more knowledge or a better understanding of the object of fandom:

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-04-01 09:47:47  
 @ anakinjmt , have you Ever heard of cut scenes not making it in the final post-production process? This isn't the first time in history and unfinished-looking scene gets cut. **God, am I the ONLY one here who knows a lot about movies??**

Of course this could be meant playfully, but seeing this post alone shows as if Phoenixmaster thinks highly of himself ('am I the ONLY one?'). However, it is a way to position himself as an elite-fan. Most nobiles-comments, however, refer to the moderators related to Mugglenet:

Posted by: butterbeer\_bottle - Posted on: 2011-04-02 15:26:02  
 Awesome! Why do I think that it was **Eric** who got to attend it again :) Hope we can get some details about this soon!

Posted by: camken - Posted on: 2011-04-02 15:25:44  
 Found out from **Andrews tweet**, can't wait for this weeks mugglecast!!

The fans address Eric (Scull, podcast/ Mugglecast editor for Mugglenet) and Andrew (Sims, editor for Mugglenet) on a first-name base. This shows they know who Eric and Andrew are, perhaps not in person, but they know them as moderators of the website. The discourse shows too that they follow them outside the Mugglenet environment, namely on Twitter as well ('Andrews tweet'). This illustrates that their love for the object of fandom does not reach out to Mugglenet alone, but these fans include Harry Potter and its fandom in their daily lives. Related to this is the reference to Mugglenet and other Potter-websites. Their gratefulness to Mugglenet shows a part of their involvement with the fandom:

Posted by: kenzbenz1020 - Posted on: 2011-04-03 08:01:41  
when i read the part about us going into the chamber, i really squealed out loud and started happy dancing. i wanted that scene in the book SO BAD and now it's in the movie!! :D **you made my LIFE, mugglenet!** <3

Posted by: emvln92 - Posted on: 2011-04-03 16:18:41  
WHERE'S THE SPOILER REVIEW??????? **i read/heard leaky's view, but i want mugglenet's point of view!!** you've had a day....i'm starting to get impatient!

Posted by: PeverellForever - Posted on: 2011-04-03 16:56:14  
**The new Mugglecast** should be released soon! I'm dying to hear it! I hope they're more positive than **the people from Pottercast** were!

The messages have references to Mugglenet and the Mugglecast in it (the podcast Mugglenet provides). The last two messages show how Mugglenet's opinion is preferred above other Potter-websites ('I want mugglenet's point of view!', 'I'm dying to hear it!'). The reference to Mugglenet was found in 10,7% of the messages, compared to 3,4% to other Potter-sites. Fans do not only gather their information on one website, but compare their information, in which they (when posting on Mugglenet) show preference for Mugglenet. This elites Mugglenet compared to the other sites (but when analyzing the Leady Cauldron website, it might be shown the other way around).

Fans visit other Potter-sites to gain more sources and get spoilers that Mugglenet does not post. Therefore some fans are spoiler fans, searching the web and looking for information to spoil other fans with. However, this creates a division in the group, namely those who want to be spoiled and those who do not wish to be spoiled:

Posted by: mahdain - Posted on: 2011-04-02 15:25:18  
and please post all the details **for us who want the spoilers**

Posted by: HPottergirl721 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 15:59:42  
ONLY TWO HOURS?!?! WHHHHHY?? t needs to be longer, I can't believe it. Am I the only one over thinking this?! **(No spoilers please guys!!)**

The division is present in these comments ('us who want the spoilers' versus 'no spoilers please'). Some fans (for example, HarryPotterGirl) have attended a pre-screening, which makes them nobile/elite-spoiler fans. Fans even go as far as distrubting their email address in public to gain more information and to be spoiled:

Posted by: firdaus - Posted on: 2011-04-02 21:09:11  
**@TheHarryPotterGirl** , i wan to know your opinion about the movie , is it the best hp film ever or the worst one ? **sent your thought at ---- mfabfirdaus@gmail.com**

This is also a way to gain more subcultural capital, to be spoiled and to get share information with other fans. Though, most spoiler- questions are answered by TheHarryPotterGirl, she

decides not to take up an elite position. She makes clear she does not want to 'spoil' in the open and communicates that to the other fans. Thereby she shows herself as understanding of the other fans that do not want to be spoiled and adapts herself to that standard. So she tries to keep her normal position and not taking the nobile position she could get:

Posted by: TheHarryPotterGirl - Posted on: 2011-04-02 20:40:30

ok. **I really don't want to spoil it here for people who don't want it to be spoiled.** if you post your email (or a separate contact method) and questions, I could answer them that way.

A special notion should be given to 'fights' occurring among the fans. Although this only forms 4,8% of the messages concerning the indicator position, fights do occur. Two fans get into an argument:

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-04-02 16:11:11

**@: sridhardc.. Deathly Hallows is still 4 hours.. Watch Part 1 first.. DUH!**

Posted by: sridhardc - Posted on: 2011-04-02 16:13:38

**@phoenixmaster Fail!** I said 5 hours and I meant part 2.

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-04-02 16:15:49

**You're still a Fool @ sridhardc..** DH2 is NEVER gonna be 5 hours. 200 pages don't make 5 hours.. **DEAL WITH IT!**

Posted by: sridhardc - Posted on: 2011-04-02 16:21:31

**@phoenixmaster C'mon dude! We're Potter fans, let's not fight.** I meant I wanted a big movie as a Potter fan. But thinking about it normally, it's kinda the right amount.

They make up, but their meaning differs and they battle over their knowledge. They do not agree on the movie time and soon they fall into a harsh argument, especially Phoenixmaster, who screams at Srihardc by using capital letters. Srihardc, however, decides to go back to the reason why they both visit and comment on the post: they are both Harry Potter fans. They both share that interest within the larger domain; they just differ on a specific subject. A solution to deal with differences in the fandom is by negotiating. This is especially visible in one of the news messages concerning a deleted scene of Ron and Hermione, throwing rocks in the lake. Some fans pointed out it felt like a scene that was recorded during a break, which made it feel as if the actors and not the characters were fooling around. This created a group of Hermione/Ron fans negotiating with Rupert/Emma fans:

Posted by: RoseMclane - Posted on: 2011-04-01 12:30:42

**@Seth\_of\_the\_Fields I agree with you 100% And I don't see how people get Rupert & Emma here.** Emma and Rupert are comfortable with one another. They would have laughed more and I honestly don't see Rupert or Emma here. I cant see Rupert standing behind Emma, looking like he wants to kiss her, dosen't really want to touch her because he loves feeling her body near his.Maybe if it was another girl he was attracted to but RON'S awakwardness here

isn't Rupert. Thats SOO Ron. [...] And I just cant picture Emma not knowing how to throw stones or atleast get the hang of it before any man needed to psycaly guide her hand. Maybe if it was Fishing,Golf or someother sport. And Emma would laugh and be more....loose. Hermione is trying to be perfect.

Although RoseMcLane does not agree with people that see Rupert and Emma in the scene (the actors instead of the characters), she negotiates and explains why she does not see that, trying to bring up a new negotiation or a rationale for her vision. This reading can either lead to more understanding or more negotiation. Related to this is the negotiation about relationships of the characters. This entails a specific spot within the fandom, for fans who have a deviating reading are called 'shippers'. Their pairing of characters differs from JK Rowling's original pairings:

Posted by: jcarroll1890 - Posted on: 2011-04-01 10:18:14  
 I thought this scene was wonderful and that instead of having the dance scene they should have had this. **The dance scene was just too suggestive for my taste since I feel like (and sorry to the Harry and Hermione shippers) Ron and Hermione have been written to be together since book 4 and even before that.** I feel like this scene shows us that Ron has more to give Hermione than typically thought of him. He can be sensitive to her. It shows a "romantic" side to him. **The dance scene was far more awkward between Harry and Hermione. Yes it isn't in the book and I can't stand that (neither were), however I feel like the stone skipping scene is more complimentary to the relationships the trio has.** I think they should have either kept both scenes or cut both. The Petunia scene was awesome also. What is going on Warner Brothers???

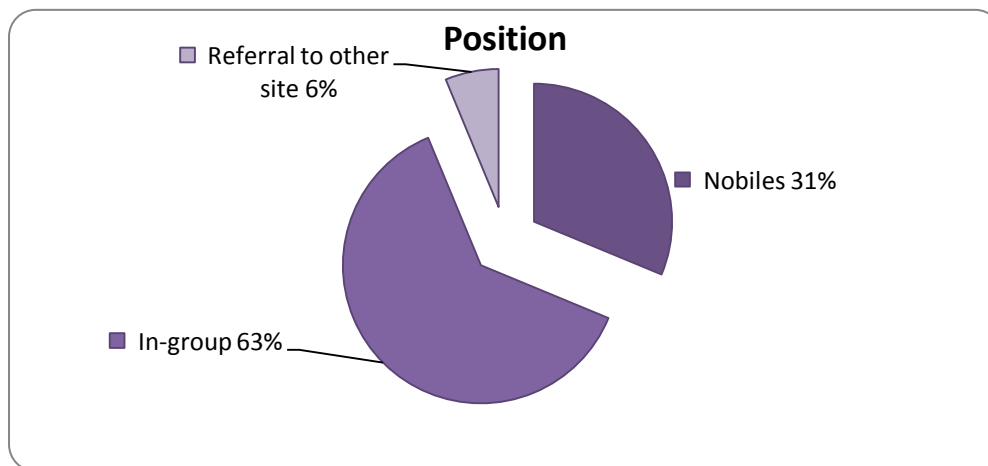
So-called 'shippers' want to discuss the pre-written relationship and favor another pairing in their reading of the text. For example, the relationship written in the book between Ron and Hermione is not what they prefer; that would be for instance a relationship between Harry and Hermione. However, this deviating view of the pairings leads to another shared understanding among the specific group of shippers and creates a mutual understanding among them.

### 5.2.2 Position within Dreuzels.com

Although the comments at Dreuzels.com were assessed on the same indicator, not all of the elements found in the Mugglenet data-sample reappeared. In this indicator the elements nobiles, in-group and referral to other websites were rediscovered, which shows in the graph at the next page. The nobile element within the Dreuzel posts is very clear: Karen, one of the websites moderators, is an often named person in the posts (five posts of fifteen lead back to her);

@Sander Postema  
 It was already suggested by **Karen**. [..]  
 Weasley1



**Graph 5.2.2: Position within the fandom, based on:**

**Note: n= 16 (total amount of messages that contain levels of Postion)**

The In-group is not as manifest as in the Mugglenet-comments, but it is the largest element in the Position. The difference is mainly that the Dutch comments do not contain the 'we' or 'us' in their discourse. As an illustration the 'closest' element to a 'we' discourse is given, namely an example of a fan addressing other fans;

**Why is nobody** enthusiast about the shots of Snape? That went above expectation! Snape at the Potter-house? And a last shot a saving Lilly? Stop Voldemort? [...]  
nielsgroffen

The referral to the other websites only happened in one post:

I read the review of **Leaky** through already, because I do not want to know too much, but I already know it is going to be a great movie.  
3 Apr 2011 om 14:49

It might be that the Dutch stick to their website because of the language, or that they do not post in the open they access other websites, but this fan indicates he got his knowledge from Leaky. By Leaky he means the Leaky Cauldron, a website that also regularly appeared in the Mugglenet-posts.

### 5.3 Othering

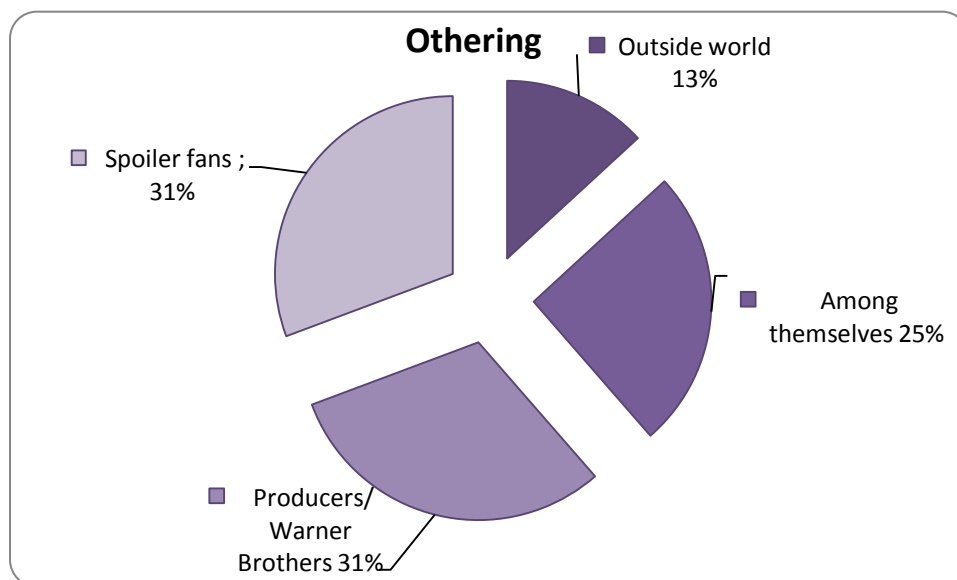
The concept of Othering is described in this thesis as how fans discuss and 'exclude' people that are 'not as much of a fan as they are'. This process in their discourse can be a means to measure their own 'fanship' against someone else's. After analyzing the messages on the identifier of Othering, it showed that Othering can happen at several levels. Fans may other the 'outside world', which can be anyone outside the fandom, or a regular movie-fan or a book-reader. They Other spoiler fans (fans who spoil elements of the Deathly Hallows part

II), the Other the producers of the movie (Warner Brothers) or its director (David Yates) by accusing them of not ‘understanding’ (performing the correct reading) enough about the Harry Potter series or adapting too much elements so the movie differs too much from the books. The last element to be found in the process of Othering was Othering among themselves, thus other fans who did not have the same amount of knowledge or fans that differ in their reading from the series.

### 5.3.1 Othering within Mugglenet.com

Othering occurred in 114 posts in the news comment sections, which means 11,8% of the total amount of posts contain a part of the concept in which Othering is visible. Within these comments, 32,5% is a stand-alone message, and 67,5% happened within the discussions. 26,5% of the total amount of reply comments contains a discourse related to Othering.

**Graph 5.3.1: Othering within the fandom, based on:**



**Note: n= 114 (total amount of messages that contain levels of Othering)**

The first pattern or element that occurred within the search for Othering is the Othering of the ‘outside’ world (people not related to the fandom or the people that only want to see the movies):

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-04-01 10:29:20  
 [...] Anytime I tell **my friends that Have Not read the books, that 'this is not in the book**, this scene and that scene is not in the book, although great scenes (ex. Burrow, dance scene, Aunt Petunia, this skipping stones one, Mundungus Fletcher in diagon alley, rufus scrimgeour intro scene, harry and voldemort "why do you live" scene) They always say "DAMN! IS ANYTHING IN THAT BOOK AT ALL?!?" lol it Does seem like according to the movies, Nothing is Barely in the books.. but it is, just not very visually representable like the movies

Posted by: mario54671 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 21:23:24

[...] Also, I have a feeling that the whole thing with Professor Lupin and Tonks might not be shown for a couple reasons. Mainly because Tonks was never properly introduced, and Lupin's been nothing but a cameo after the third film, so it'd feel a bit superfluous **since the audience that's ONLY seen the films won't give a crap about them.**

Posted by: JessicaE - Posted on: 2011-04-03 02:46:16

[...]THE MOVIE IS NOT THE BOOK, if they did the movies exactly the same as the books are written nobody would watch them because it would get boring! In a movie you need action, you need humor, and you need to change things in order for the movie to appeal to different groups of people. **The movies are not made exclusively for fans, they are made so that everyone can enjoy them!** If anything, you should be thankful that they are sticking so close to the book to make the fans happy. **But these movies are extremely expensive to make and they need that money back by making people go watch it, people that are not huge fans or fans at all. And is that not good enough for you v.i.p's? Then do us all a favour and never watch it, move in under a rock and stay there forever.**[...]

As stated in these extracts, people who have not read the books need to be explained what differences occur when comparing the books and the movies. So they have a lack of knowledge according to those that have read the books (and have seen the movies). And the movies need to differ from the books, for it is not possible to put every element of the book in the film. Plus, they need to appeal to a general audience, which is also indicated in the last two examples. It can be argued that the reading the fans have from the series differs from each other: those who only saw the movies have a different reading to those who have read the books as well, and the general movie audience will develop yet another reading.

Secondly, it has to be discussed that fans also Other among themselves. Either they declare that there is a difference between the book fans and the movie fans, or they 'measure' their own fanship to compare to other fans (as seen in the post of JessicaE 'not good enough for you v.i.p's?'). To illustrate these elements:

Posted by: Jeanne123 - Posted on: 2011-04-03 12:11:34

there is solid information that show us that this movie will be amazing, **people bawing didnt even see it and are all just bit.ches that cant understand that movie != book**

Posted by: HorcriKiller - Posted on: 2011-04-03 10:26:47

My friend actually went to the screening. He said he was very pleased, but **he's not quite as big as a fan as me**, so maybe his expectations are different.

The fans themselves state that people that did not see the movie yet should not complain, or that another friend who saw the movie 'is not as big as a fan as me', so he differs in reading and therefore can feel different about the movie.

Another element is the relationship between the movie producers (David Yates) and production company that is behind the movies (Warner Brothers) and the fans. The fans blame the producers for not sticking to the authentic story, but instead have adapted the movie to be a typical Hollywood product. They measure their own reading against the reading Yates

and Warner Brothers developed, which might not be the preferred fan-reading, but could be understood as a general audience reading. That type of reading will be negotiated or even opposite to the fans reading, but in that way the movie will be understandable to a larger audience. The fans seem not too happy with this development, for it differs too much from the source it all began with, namely the story JK Rowling developed and they learned to love:

Posted by: ginmo - Posted on: 2011-04-03 16:06:29

[...] I'm annoyed that **these movie makers are so stereotypical hollywood...** \*sigh\*

Posted by: Liliana - Posted on: 2011-04-03 18:43:43

If the description of the last battle between Voldemort and Harry is true then I am seriously thinking about not watching the movie! **They completely destroyed that part and made it completely ridiculous! I hate that they only care about making money instead of keeping their promise and making the last two films very similar to the books!**

Posted by: devonprep32 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 19:30:51

Are you kidding me? This cannot be happening. **Once again the clumsy Harry Potter filmmakers decide to switch around a movie that can easily be adapted from book to screen.** This ticks me off, mainly because it's only two hours long and you could keep things the same from the book to the film, especially since it's already more than halfway through the book, and it still wouldn't even be that long. It's the last fucking film. **How can they do this? They better understand that they have the ability to keep everything in, but I guess it just slipped their minds and they don't want to have to pay more money with Warner Brothers, which is a stupid excuse. They just like to do their own thing and screw over J.K. Rowling, which is why I'm confused as to why she even agrees to some stupid things in the films.** [...] I love Harry Potter, but when it comes to the films, **the directors have no idea what they're doing sometimes.** DHP2.

In the examples above it becomes clear that Warner Brothers and the filmmakers are Othered on their knowledge about the books. The fans comment as if they seem to know a better storyline themselves. This might lead to even more fury and measurements of fanship among the fans themselves and the reading 'the industry' wants to present. In the next example a fan even literally asks for a proof of knowledge from Yates that he read the books and insults him for changing the world JK Rowling developed:

Posted by: BravestManiEverKnew - Posted on: 2011-03-17 19:25:45

This whole Harry/Hermione thing is just ridiculous. **I want David Yates to show me where exactly in the HP books that it says Harry ever saw Hermione as more than just friends. I'd love to watch him finally crack open one of the books and see what really happened in them. It's just frustrating that he thinks he's at liberty to discuss the relationships of characters he never really developed. J.K. did that for him. His job is to just translate it to the screen, not add completely wrong plot twists.** I yi yi. Other than that, this seventh-movie-part-two is looking So amazingly EPIC!!!

Posted by: Ginny901 - Posted on: 2011-03-17 18:47:58

**Why must WB torture us??** Though it is fun to brainstorm and think of possibilities, **I hope they stay true to the book, and Jo Rowlings magnificent world!!!** :)

The fans wish the producers thus stayed more true to the books and their preferred reading. Another example of that, is, as seen before, the shippers. Yates, the director is positioned as a Hermione/Harry-shipper, as will be illustrated in the following example:

Posted by: o0Amy0o - Posted on: 2011-03-17 19:08:52  
 MAKE ME FRIGGEN PUKE! That last little snippet there with "it could easily slip into something else" **He is definitely a H/HR shipper. Makes me so mad when they can influence subtle changes from the book to what they would rather see.....FUMING.**

It gives fans another reason to Other him if they are not following the love story developed by JK Rowling concerning Ron and Hermione, but if the producers hint at a possible romance between Harry and Hermione (H/HR). That reading is seen by the fans as oppositional and not true to the book. Therefore it is considered as a 'mistake' that Yates tries to put that element in, which makes the fans commenting have a better reading measured to Yates reading of the original intention of JK Rowling.

The fourth stage in Othering is about the fans who want spoilers and those who do not want to receive or read them. This element can be considered to be a bit similar to the element of 'Othering among themselves', for it entails a division in the group of fans. The one group of fans wants to know all directly and the other group does not. Some fans consider waiting for the last movie without being spoiled an act of virtue and thus a thing a real fan would do, while others want to gain the available knowledge and news as fast as possible:

Posted by: LordVoldemortsAssistant - Posted on: 2011-03-29 13:31:05  
 I am NOT going to watch it.....**a true fan** can wait til the movie!!!!!!

Posted by: mahdain - Posted on: 2011-04-02 16:07:49  
**And we need the spoilers please...other who dont want to be spoiled just dont read them..nobody is forcing you to do so**

The group therefore becomes divided into the 'wannabe-spoiled' and 'want-to-wait', which brings along that there is a certain misunderstanding that some fans disapprove of the act of spoiling:

Posted by: Wolfram - Posted on: 2011-04-02 19:51:25  
 [...] **And WHY does everyone want to be spoiled?** Next you'll be asking about how many shots there are of each character. **It's like you want the whole movie revealed to you before you actually see it. Relax.** I would think that seeing it for yourselves and having few expectations and letting it surprise you is MUCH more rewarding.[...]

Posted by: PinkCoconutIce - Posted on: 2011-04-02 21:18:36  
 [...] heads up to everyone though, **if you're SERIOUSLY going to tell the people everything about the movie if you saw it or direct/exact stuff, PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE say spoiler alert!!** i'm just as nervous about the ending of harry potter, but if i'm going to have to face the end, **it might as well go out with a bang in the theatre, NOT from someone else's comment!**

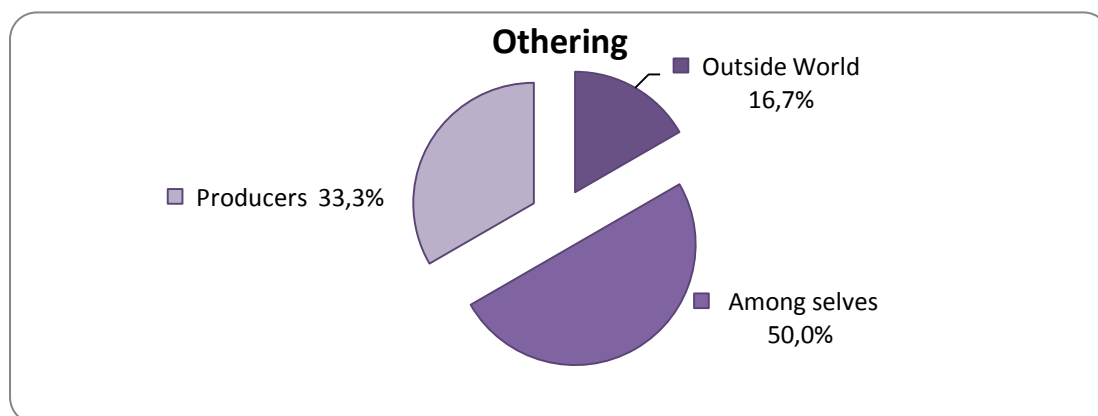
Thus, there is a distinction visible between fans that do want the spoilers and those that do not want them. Some indicate ‘true fans can wait’, ‘it might as well go out with a bang, not from someone else’s comment’, or like Wolfram says ‘relax’. These comments exemplify the disapproval of the act of spoiling within the fandom. That vision is contradicted by those who are yearning to see a spoiler so they already have an idea what will be happening and if it will fit ‘their reading’ of the book (when Amy says that it makes her sad if they influence subtle changes from the book so it looks better in the movie). This is also related to the next indicator ‘Authenticity’. The spoiler fans possess a certain amount of subcultural capital that no one has or at least not a lot of fans have, in that way their level of authenticity can increase.

### 5.3.2 Othering within Drezels.com

Othering was the smallest factor found in the Mugglenet-data, as it is in the Drezel-data too.

Only five cases of Othering could be identified in the Drezel-posts.

**Graph 5.3.2: Othering within the fandom, based on:**



**Note: n= 5 (total amount of messages that contain levels of Othering)**

They contained only three elements of Othering, namely Othering of the outside world, Othering of Warner Brothers and Othering among themselves. To start with Othering of the producers and the production company; the Dutch fans were less picky at measuring Warner Brothers reading. Nor did they give names or curse them, but they just referred to the company as ‘they’:

I do not know if I am seeing it straight, but if you pause at the piece where Freds body is, it is just like he does not have an ear. Maybe they let George die in the movie? **They** change more things.

cyriel - 18 Mar 2011 om 20:27

Othering of the outside World, occurred the least within the Othering-indicator. It happened once that a fan referred to other fans as ‘people who did not read the books’. In the

Mugglenet-data it happened regularly that there were distinctions made between fans who only saw the movies, only read the books or who commented on both. One fan out of 92 Dreuzels-comments made a distinction with those who have knowledge from the books and those who do not:

I think it is a shame that they cut the scene of the threesome, because then **people wo did not read the books** would have understood that scene better i think and the scene of mr Weasley was really funny, they should have let that in too  
3 Apr 2011 om 14:38

Othering among themselves appeared to be the element that came across most often, namely three times out of the six posts that contained the indicator Othering. One of them was a reply message, in which it appeared that a fan was ‘lectured’ about the differences in meaning within the fandom. Some fans post a message that contains the sense they make a distinction between those who share their opinion and those who do not. In this example a fan ‘lectures’ another fan about some clips that were already known and posted on the website again, because there was a lack of new material:

@Tamara It is nice that these clips are put up too. Some of us do like to see that. If there are no new clips for part 2 yet, it is hard to put them on right.  
Anieck

Lecturing another fan, in this case Anieck comments Tarama that there are people out there who do like to see clips, even if they are old, is also related to the next indicator: Authenticity. For knowing these clips are old ones, gives the impression that Anieck already knew of their existence and therefore knows more than Tamara.

## 5.4 Authenticity/ Subcultural Capital

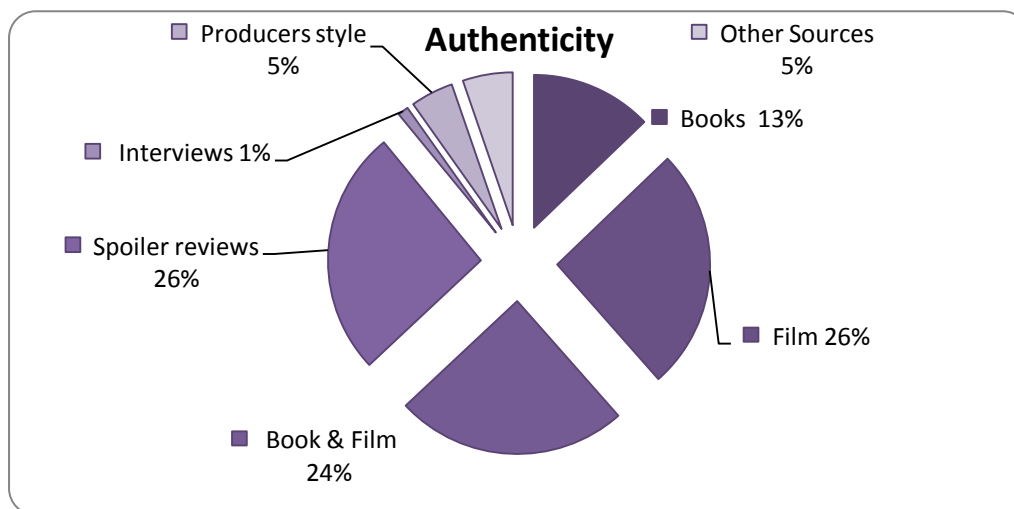
The third indicator explored is Authenticity or the presence of subcultural capital in the comments. Subcultural capital is one of the types of capital invented by Bourdieu (1986) to indicate a certain knowledge of a sub-field of a subject. This can be either gained by the fans themselves and build up by participation within the fandom and affection with the object of fandom (by reading about it, watching all movies, reading all books, knowing the characters and knowing the actors). On the other hand, it is also partly made up of symbolic capital: The level of prestige or the status a fan earns/has addressed by other fans. Besides the attributing from other fans, a fan can also claim these capitals by himself, by trying to be wiser or more knowledgeable than the other fans. They even might claim a status themselves. These capitals

can make one fan more authentic than the other: Therefore this indicator is named Authenticity.

#### 5.4.1 Authenticity within Mugglenet.com

In 25,8% (n=249) Authenticity played a role, of which 30,2% (n=88) was visible in the total amount of reply messages (n=291). Most comments containing discourse that showed subcultural capital were stand alone messages (64,7%). Apparently lots of fans visiting the news section post to show their knowledge or they post something they want to share about the subject which is not known by others (in their opinion). Like already turned out in the previous indicators, several patterns could be distinguished in this indicator as well.

**Graph 5.4.1: Subcultural capital within the fandom, based on:**



**Note: n=249 (total amount of messages that contain levels of subcultural capital)**

As indicated in the graph above, the spoiler fans messages contain the highest level of subcultural capital. This could be, because the spoiler fans possess knowledge no other fans has. They have read the reviews or saw a pre-screening of the movie. Other fans know what happens in the book, but do not know (yet) how it is translated to the screen. It is striking, however, that a lot of the fan posts contain somehow more knowledge on the film, than does finding the assumption that they would discuss more about the books. However, this might be explained due to the fact that the news messages chosen to analyze are related to deleted scenes of the movies or to the pre-screening of part II of the last movie. So the data already leans more towards knowledge about the movies than the books.

The elements interviews or producers style are the least visible in the comments. By interviews, interviews with JK Rowling or the people involved with the movie are meant. Illustrated in the following comments are references to these sources, like Heyman who is the



producer of the film, an interview Emerson (founder Mugglent.com) had with JK Rowling and an interview with Yates (director of the movie):

Posted by: Lucia\_Swanne - Posted on: 2011-04-02 15:35:13

To everyone that's concerned about the time:**We already knew about this - Heyman confirmed it in an interview a few days ago. He said that it would be 'the shortest film',[...]**

Posted by: GinaC - Posted on: 2011-03-18 21:25:26

Okay...where to start? :) First of all, I totally agree that Harry and Hermione were not meant for each other, and totally understand the frustration at anyone contradicting what happened in the book. **But am I the only one who recalls J.K. Rowling's response when Emerson said to her that people who thought they would get together were crazy?** She told him that it MIGHT have gone the other way if things had panned out differently, and Hermione's musing Harry's hair and the walking arm in arm...all that was to show that the POTENTIAL was there, at least briefly given the situation they were in. **I don't have a link right now, but I remember her saying that, and I think Yates was saying that they were trying to convey that in the movie as well (and the hair thing was definitely there, and I loved it).** [...]

The fans reference to 'other sources' indicates that they point out where they gather their knowledge. As seen in the first element it could be knowledge gained from reading interviews posted on the website, but it might as well be from offline sources (newspapers, tv-shows etc), DVD-commentary, or another (fan) website/blog:

Posted by: AdamPotter123 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 17:36:37

team\_malfoy here ya go:<http://perezhilton.com/2011-04-01-footage-review-of-harry-potter-and-the-deathly-hallows-part-2-cinemacon>

The referral also shows how they help other fans gain capital and can be spoiled (which leads back to the Othering element of fans who want to be spoiled). As the fans themselves write in their post, they know what is going to happen in the movie, though some fans differ in knowledge, using the book or the previous movies as points of referral and knowledge. In the following comments the fans refer to a deleted scene with elements that were not in the book, but adapted for the movie. The scene showed Hermione and Ron skipping stones onto the water, while Harry is in the back trying to open a Horcrux:

Posted by: EowynRowena - Posted on: 2011-04-01 08:49:56

So beautiful. **Not in the book, but a perfect movieism.** I love their interaction here. Perfect! Exactly as I imagine it when reading the books :)

Posted by: MadForNeville - Posted on: 2011-04-01 10:46:23

Very sweet scene! **Not in the book, but neither was the Harry/Hermione dance.** I would much rather have seen this one in the film.

Although the scene was not in the book, EowynRowena understands it was good for the movie version of the story and how she would picture the Ron and Hermione she 'knows' from the books interacting. MadForNeville refers to a scene that is included in

part I, but was not in the books either. So she makes clear she read the books and saw the movie, thus she would score on both authenticity levels. The following example is like the first example, but this case shows that the fans' reading of Ron and Hermione based on the book characters differs from the movie adaption. Thus for this fan, the book and movie characters have a different reading, which are not always equal:

Posted by: RunRonRun - Posted on: 2011-04-01 14:01:02

It's a cute scene, but it's quite un-Ron-like to me. I agree with whoever said that it's more like seeing Emma and Rupert interact than Ron and Hermione. **I just can't picture the book-Ron and book-Hermione acting like that...**

The next comment case is a typical 'reply-message' posted on Mugglenet.com. Several questions were asked before (which also contains the next indicator, namely Playing) and Sujay\_22jan takes on the role to answer them with his or her knowledge, based on the books, previous movies and his or her own pre-assumptions. This is typical, for the fans try to help each other out and by showing the things they know themselves, they 'open up' their knowledge, which can be discussed again. Again, as a part of community construction they are looking a shared meaning or mutual knowledge (in this case, see who shares their reading or spread their reading as an answer):

Posted by: Sujay\_22jan - Posted on: 2011-03-17 18:02:52

@ WINKYXX and Taylrrrrr..... **I think u have forgotten the book.....** voldemort summons the hat from the window of hogwarts.. harry clearly sees the hat flying thru the air outta one window(probably dumbo's office) and dropping on neville's head....

@ taylrrrrr..... Why would harry even have the sorting hat.. he never has it with him....

@everyone.... **guys this is not the potter's house.... its destroyed.. we saw that in part 1...** this is the CRYSTAL house where Snape is killed by voldemort..

Some fans even try to show off their knowledge by commenting directly their reading to another fan as if there is no other way of understanding the case. In this example, Phoenixmaster bases his knowledge and analyses of Grasper's question on the book, but addresses Grasper about it personally ('think about it') and talks about Voldemort (Voldy) as if he is someone familiar. Related to the elite fans or fans that claim themselves elite, as seen before:

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-04-02 14:39:44

@Grasper.. Well that's the WHOLE problem and weakness about Voldemort... He's too Arrogant! So he always thinks ver Little of Harry as if he's that easy. If he is, why hasn't **Voldy** killed him Yet! Lol

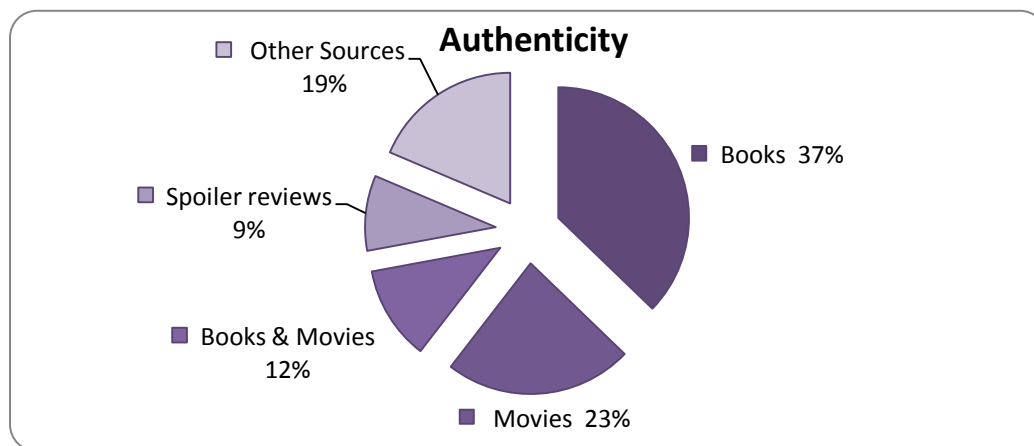
Someone like Voldemort would definitely think Harry Potter would try and sneak back to Hogwarts... **because think about it Grasper.. Voldy has NO CLUE that Dumbledore and Harry knew about the Horcruxes.** So at this point, he thinks he's got the Whole World in his finger tips, and all Potter can do is run and hide.

These comments do not only show that the fans are familiar with the books; they also show their understanding and way of reading the books. For example in the last post, it is not only illustrated that Phoenixmaster shows he has more subcultural capital than Grasper, he shows he knows what happens in the movie as well as his understanding of the books, for he corrects Grasper in the subjects he forgot. Concluding, authenticity can be shown on several levels. Not just offline or other sources, but the knowledge and reading fans have (and share) on the books and/ or movies seem to play a great role too.

### 5.4.2 Authenticity within Dreuzels.com

Authenticity was the indicator that scored highest in the Dutch posts. 46,7% of the comments showed an element of Authenticity. The elements that could be identified in the Dutch posts were Knowledge based on books, films, books and movies, spoiler reviews and other sources.

**Graph 5.4.2: Authenticity within the fandom, based on:**



**Note: n= 43 (total amount of messages that contain levels of Authenticity)**

Striking in the results was the high amount of knowledge based on the books. Most fans (37,2% of the messages identified under Authenticity) referred to the books as their main source of knowledge, followed by knowledge on the films (23,3%) and knowledge based on the books and films (11,6%). It might be considered that the Dreuzel-posters are more familiar (or prefer to show their knowledge by referring to) with the books than the fans posting on Mugglenet.

The following examples demonstrate some other sources these fans named, which could not often be identified in the Mugglenet data. The first example includes a fan referring to the script of Deathly Hallows part I. The second example (which is written by Karen, the fan that is recognized as elite) illustrates a referral to the first movie as well, but also to its soundtrack, for she names a song that figured on it. Note as well how she presents

the general information about the movie premiers in her first sentence (this was asked by another user):

She could have spoken a bit more clear, couldn't she? :D **I did not think of it as a shocking scene because I already read the script and there is no music with this scene, so...** [...] Vincent - 25 Mar 2011 om 15:46

15th of July for the US and UK, 14 for the Netherlands, 13th of July for Belgium ;) Ginny's scream gave me goosebumps! And all the other images xD **Also the music, that is the 'Snape to Malfoy manor' track from part I that they played at the beginning :P** Karen - 18 Mar 2011 om 8:29

The last example is a 'regular' post for DreuZels-users: 'like it happened in the book' is a typical example of how these fans relate to their book knowledge. They implement their reading of the book and state to know what happens in it:

Too bad this is not in the movie like it happened in the book and it should have been in. Ramona - 25 Mar 2011 om 23:04

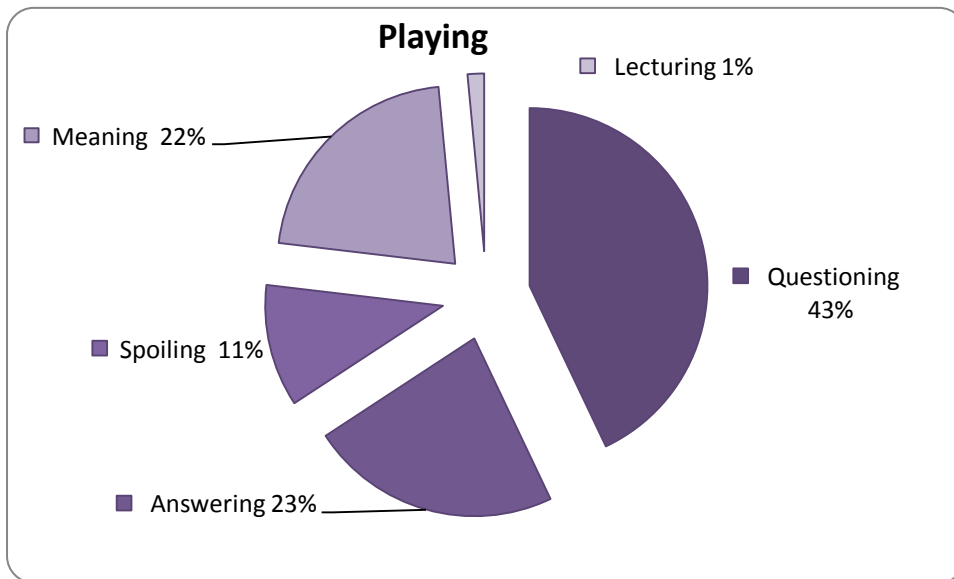
## 5.5 Playing

The last indicator to be explored is the concept of 'Playing'. Playing is the indicator wherein the liquidity of the fandom will manifest itself the most, for it entails how fans 'play', thus move around in the fandom. They can play to increase their knowledge, to become part of a group, but they can also choose to not be active and lurk. Within the indicator Playing again several elements were discovered: The act of spoiling can also be related to playing, fans share their meaning or 'lecture' it to other fans (negative way of declaring their meaning), and they can also lecture their reading of the series to other fans. However, the easiest way to play within the fandom is by asking questions or responding to questions from other fans.

### 5.5.1 Playing within Mugglenet.com

Playing occurs in 29% (n=280 posts) of the total amount of comments posted following the four news messages. 36,4% of these posts containing an element of Playing occurred within the discussion posts. An overview of the elements (Meaning, Lecturing, Answering, Questioning and Spoiling) that were present in this indicator is presented in the graph on the next page:

Graph 5.5.1: Playing within the fandom, based on:



**Note:** n=333 (total amount of messages that contain elements of Playing)

The first is the element Questioning: These posts contain elements to gain social capital, by literally posing a question to other fans:

Posted by: Ginny901 - Posted on: 2011-03-18 12:05:17

**@everyone-** I just watched it again and paused right before Draco is hiding it is DEFINITELY Voldemort. He's bald. In front of him (to which he appears to be screaming at) looks like maybe a Hogwarts. **The building reminded me of that part in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire (the movie) when Harry tells Ron (and seamus standing next to him) that he is a git, then walks over to where draco is sitting in a tree. I'm not sure, but thats what it looked like. Or, it could be Hogsmeade?**

The second element to be explored is Answering: In response to the questions some fans decide to answer, but also pose new questions. Some even indicate their answers are not proven, but are based on their opinion or reading of the series, like the response tazdevil1213 gives to since\_when\_have\_you\_called\_me\_potter:

Posted by: since\_when\_have\_you\_called\_me\_potter - Posted on: 2011-03-18 16:41:48

**@tazdevil1213,** I don't think Harry will tell anyone he's going to die. I think Hermione is consoling Harry because Voldemort has just announced in a magnified voice that he has one hour to give himself up. Also, when Hermione says 'Harry, quickly!'. **the 'quickly' sounds as though it was when she told him to be quick in getting the dittany for Ron in part 1?**

Posted by: tazdevil1213 - Posted on: 2011-03-18 17:27:29

**@since\_when\_have\_you\_called\_me\_potter** I would like to believe it was the scene after the magnified Voldemort voice, but if you look closely, there is a massive amount of rubble on the ground and it looks like Hermione and Ron have been through a couple of battles. This scene is definitely somewhere towards the end of the book, which makes me think that it IS when they have Harry tell the other two about going into the forest alone.

The response tazdevil1213 gives to another fan includes his or her reading of the scene, for apparently it is not exactly like that in the book. Tazdevil1213 gives the impression the answer is a guess ('I would like to believe') and therefore entails the third element of the Playing-indicator too, namely Meaning. This pattern shows that fans state their opinions, which might lead to a mutual agreement or reading of a certain case. This element entails not just the opinion of the fan, but the wondering, amazement or thoughts of a fan too ('I think, I thought, it might be'):

Posted by: Grasper - Posted on: 2011-04-02 11:26:49

**[...] but i just think** the film(s) need that little extra bit to show how desperate the death eaters are to find Harry. **u could say** that this was done by them adding the scene raiding the train **but i thought** that was stupid TBH, because why the fuck would he go back to hogwarts i **mean** how thick is voldemort if he thinks harrys just gunna turn up at hogwarts XD

Posted by: Sujay\_22jan - Posted on: 2011-03-17 17:26:04

**I think** the scene when ginny screams and runs away from mr weasley is when voldemort brings HARRY's body.... Its morning so almost the end of battle.... **and we can see neville and mr and mrs weasley and lots of other people in the background staring at something.... So it might be voldemort bringing harry's body...**

The last opinion of Sujay\_22jan stirs a reaction from Zack D, visible in the next example. In these two comments, the element of looking for a shared meaning or mutual agreement is present, for both fans have a reading of the scene, but help each other by indicating what they saw or thought to see (Zack D. even admits 'I didn't notice that'):

Posted by: Zack D. - Posted on: 2011-03-17 17:32:18

@Sujay\_22jan **Oh yeah, you are right. I didn't notice that.** At first, **I thought** Mr. Weasley was Draco for a second.

Fourthly, it is interesting to look at how the spoiling element works within the Playing indicator. The easiest way in which it is already visible, is to point out the questioning of fans themselves to be spoiled:

Posted by: mahdain - Posted on: 2011-04-02 16:49:06

**@viraled16 i also want to be spoiled..should i give you the email?**

Posted by: RandyBoyz92 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 17:19:06

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1201607/board/thread/180617872> **Oclumania review**

**SPOILERS (I'm to scared to read it so I dont know if its good)**

Oclumenclumenia review \* SPOILERS\*ew

The first comment illustrates how a fan asks another fan who attended a pre-screening (Viraled16) to spoil him, which also shows the search for building up subcultural capital. Mahdain and RandyBoyz92 want to learn what is in the film, thus how their book knowledge is translated to the screen. The last posts of RandyBoyz92 and AdamPotter123 demonstrates

how fans help each other out; Randy does not want to read the spoiler, he is afraid of it, so Adam decides to help him out and assesses the review for him:

Posted by: AdamPotter123 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 17:20:11  
**RandyBoyz92, I'm reading it! I'll let you know if it's good or not!**

Posted by: AdamPotter123 - Posted on: 2011-04-02 17:22:51  
**EXCITED... and then not. The spoilers were not as "spoiler-ish" as others have been. Nothing new, except for 2 things. The review is actually a little negative it seems. Says everything was "okay; not too much, not too little." very opposite of what most people are saying.**

This is also part of Playing, for fans help each other out even within the spoiler posts, which has proven to be a 'separate' topic within the news comments.

The last element within the indicator Playing is 'lecturing'. Lecturing should be seen as a negative aspect within Playing. Some fans see it as their task to lecture others. This only happens within five messages, based on the Lecturing discourse these fans handle. The discourse in these messages is about insulting the other fans or addressing them strongly in an unfriendly way to state that the other fans' (even general) knowledge shows some gaps ('war movies always deviate from the book'):

Posted by: phoenixmaster - Posted on: 2011-03-17 21:21:27  
 @arwen21.. **Don't know if you watch much war movies, but they ALWAYS deviate from the book.** including LOTR battles. **In order for this CINEMATIC Battle of Hogwarts to work, there HAS to be some changes and additions in the battle.. PLUS, there's more IMPORTANT things to worry about mate, like the Prince's Tale** and all the exposition and etc.

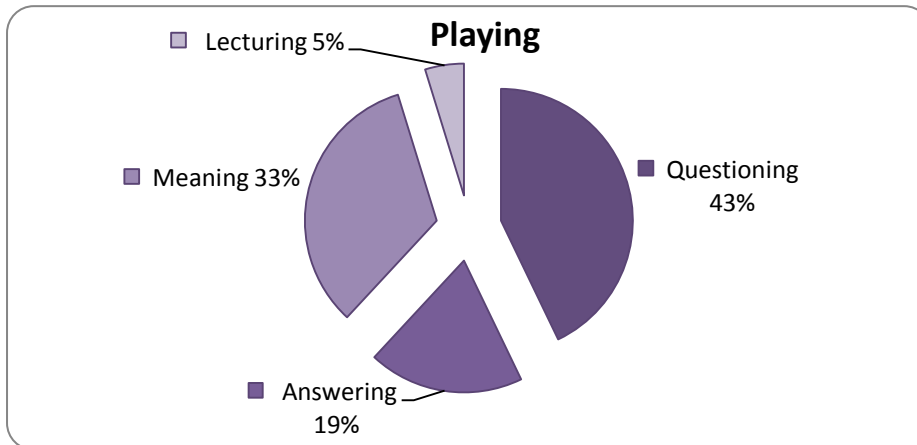
It can be concluded that playing is a liquid factor and shows how the fandom copes with gaining knowledge and spreading it. Besides that, Playing is also an indicator to see how fans treat each other: the news comment section can be seen as a place to post comments and meanings about the news subject. Meaning makes up 25,7% of the messages that were indicated as Playing-messages, but it is rather striking to see that most posts contained elements of Questioning (51,1%) and Answering (27,1%). The fandom, may be stated, is really interactive on Mugglenet.com news sections. It can be concluded that fans use news messages to gain knowledge or spread it and that they rely on other fans to help them out. It shows that there is a quest for sharing opinions and perhaps thereby for creating a mutual understanding among these fans.

### 5.5.2 Playing within Drezels.com

The only element that could not be identified the Drezels-data was the element of

spoiling. This may be because the Dutch fans were not treated to a pre-screening or to reading a lot of spoiler-messages, so they could not share this knowledge directly. The other elements were found back, so lecturing, meaning, questioning and answering were present again. In which Questioning scored highest again and lecturing less often. Looking at Lecturing first, it can be concluded that it still was visible in 5% of the posts with the indicator Playing.

**Graph 5.5.2: Playing within the fandom, based on:**



**Note: n=42 (total amount of messages that contain elements of Playing)**

This could be considered to happen more often within the Dutch posts than in the Mugglenet-posts, but when looking at the raw data of both websites Mugglenet still had five messages identified as lecturing, compared to two on the Dutch website.

@ward **It is not filmed in that particular order, remember?** You can see they are still wearing the clothes they wore in the Ministry and Karen also put it in the description, they dive into the fire place as they flee from the Ministry of Magic in Part I.  
Anieck - 19 Mar 2011 om 22:38

Though the fans correct themselves and even thank the other for expanding their knowledge, they might not see it is as a negative remark:

Oh yeah, didn't read that, I'm noticing it now, very nice!  
ward - 19 Mar 2011 om 23:16

The next element, Meaning, was discovered in 14 messages (33%). The fans state their meaning on scenes, changes the directors made or differences from the book or previous movies. The following example illustrates a typical Meaning post from the Dreuzel comment sections, namely a fan that shares her understanding of a certain deleted scene (not seeking, though, to create a mutual understanding like in the Mugglenet-data, but rather an expression



of her opinion, for she does not receive a reply on this nor does she look for confirmation of her reading ‘I don’t know, I think it’s better that way’):

**I think** it’s a great scene. On the one side it is too bad it got cut out, on the Other hand it is not. **I think** the opening scene is much better now, **I think** the text at the beginning would spoil it a bit. I don’t know, it is better this way.  
Anieck

The last element to be found is the combination of Questioning (43%) & Answering (19%). Not every question is answered, but not all questions seek to be answered (e.g. posing ‘Only two hours?’ could be seen as a statement/meaning or as a question when it is asked at the beginning of the section concerning the pre-screening of the new movie). In the next example HP-fan wonders whether it is the character of Ron that is shown in the scene or that he is misreading it. The question is posted as a final sentence and gets answered almost immediately by another fan:

These scenes are super! I really had to cry when i read fred would die, now I’m seeing that on screen and I already had tears in my eyes so with the movie I’m gonna cry like a baby. **Is it Ron that bends over Fred by the way?**  
hp-fan - 18 Mar 2011 om 17:52

@ hp-fan **Yes, that is Ron.** [...] Annelot - 18 Mar 2011 om 18:05

A reply like this identifies the quest for a mutual understanding of the scene. They agree on it being Ron and not someone else, as both fans read the character portrayed in the scene to be Ron. It could even be that Annelot uses her knowledge of the trailer and perhaps of the books as well, to answer HP-fan’s question about the scene, but this is not indicated in her reply.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Social capital is a liquid concept, characterized by four identifiers that possibly overlap. Looking at liquidity is important for community construction, for it makes visible which indicators are present the most within the data. This conclusion briefly elaborates on the liquidity within Mugglenet.com and Drezels.com. Secondly, a comparison will be made for the data, as this conclusion entails elements of interviews that were held with Harry Potter fans. That offers a look at what the community members themselves consider to be important factors within community life. Lastly, an overall conclusion of the web-analysis and the interviews is given.

### 5.6.1 Liquidity of social capital

This thesis looks at web-data and interviews. Within the web-data already a difference can be observed between the international forum and the Dutch language-bounded forum. Starting off with summarizing the order of importance of the indicators and stating the difference between them, before drawing a conclusion:

**Table 2: Overview of ranking indicators at both websites:**

	Mugglenet.com	Dreuzels.com
<b>1</b>	Position (39%)	Authenticity (43%)
<b>2</b>	Playing (29%)	Playing (36%)
<b>3</b>	Authenticity (26%)	Position (16%)
<b>4</b>	Othering (12%)	Othering (5%)

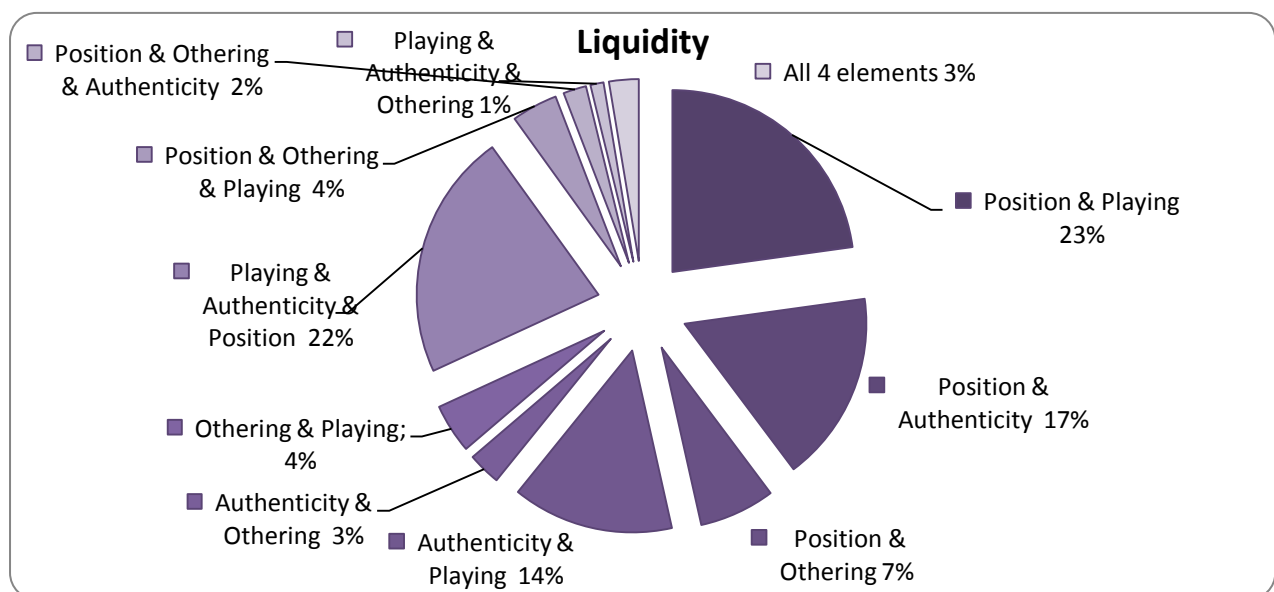
In contrast to Putnam's theory (2000), the worldwide accessible Mugglenet.com has a higher amount of posts containing Position than the Northern example of Dreuzels.com. Putnam argued the ties in Northern European countries were stronger. As argued by Rogozinska (2007), the Internet offers a less hierarchal, easier accessible sphere for people to participate in. This shows that the indicator Position scores high, especially within the worldwide sample. The lower score within the Dutch example may also be explained with a stance from Putnam (2000): computer mediated communities namely also bring along certain disadvantages, such as access or user-friendliness. By writing the forum content in Dutch and maintaining the website in Dutch, the Dreuzel-sample is local and language-bound. For not every person in the world will speak Dutch, so they set their own boundaries by not running the website in English.

Before elaborating further on the different most recurring indicators on both sites, first the high score of the indicator Playing is highlighted. The high position of this indicator shows how important liquidity is within the fandom. Fans learn, grow, change, discuss and share by Playing. As Hills (2002) argued, they compete over understandings of the text, access to the fandom and their status. This means that by playing they can gain another Position, more Authenticity or even Other fans. It shows as well that these fans are looking for like-minded people or ones that share their knowledge, for they 'play' and try to seek their way in the fandom. This is a very important finding for community construction, because the

quest for mutuality is present and visible within the research on the web-samples.

The fact that Position scores higher in the international data than in the language-bound sample of Dreuzels illustrates a stronger sense of a ‘we-feeling’ at Mugglenet. Perhaps this can be explained through the international diversity of its members, who may try and look for the community-feeling so everyone feels welcome and part of the group. A lot of posters kept coming back to the news section. Mugglenet.com showed a greater level of interactivity, already visible when comparing the @-replies. Mugglenet counted 291 replies and Dreuzels.com just five. It is considerable that the Mugglenet-users tried to create a ‘we-feeling’ by talking about an ‘us’ or a ‘we’ in their posts, for this creates a ‘we-feeling’-discourse, that belongs to the indicator Position. This interaction also is portrayed in the liquidity of social capital on Mugglenet.com. Within the explored data liquidity (identifiers that overlap) can be confirmed for 35,4% percent of the total amount of Mugglenet-comments. They contain two or more indicators (from the four indicators that could be identified):

**Graph 5.6.1: Liquidity within the Mugglenet-sample, combined factors:**

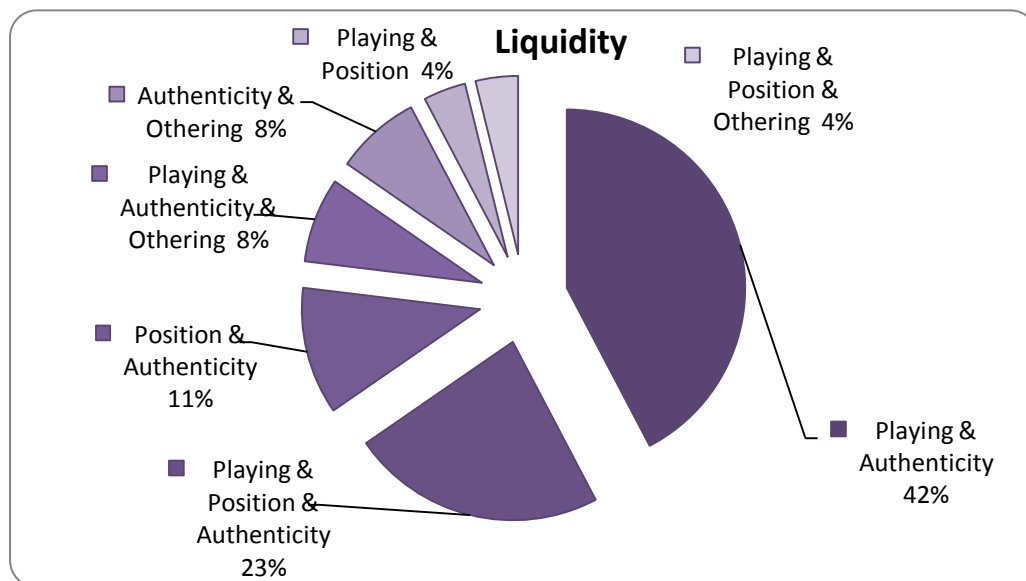


**Note: n=342 (total amount of messages that contain two or more indicators)**

The graph demonstrates that the combination of Position and Playing occurs most often in the posts that contain two or more indicators (namely 23%). The combination of Playing, Authenticity and Position occurring most often, as combination of three factors, is not surprising, for they are the top three of present factors within the Mugglenet-fandom. Thus, one’s position, for instance, can be reached through playing or showing authenticity.

The lower level of liquidity on Drezels.com may be caused by several reasons. First of all, the Drezels-data contained more stand-alone messages. Besides that, Drezels.com is language-bound, for the language written there is Dutch, which only makes the forum available for Belgian and Dutch fans. Consequently, the diversity may be less and an atmosphere to post one's knowledge and opinion develops. Thus, the high position of Authenticity can be declared due to the greater amount of stand-alone messages, which induces the lower level of interaction:

**Graph 5.6.3: Liquidity within the Drezels-sample, combined factors:**



**Note: n=26 (total amount of messages that contain two or more indicators)**

On Drezels.com in 28,3% of the messages two or more indicators could be identified. Authenticity and Playing scored highest, for these two indicators appeared already most often within the comments (namely 43% and 36%). Related to the results of liquidity for the Mugglenet-site, it is not striking to find Position, Playing and Authenticity again as often occurring combination, which came first there. The differences found in the results, may be cultural differences, for the international crowd contained more Americans and English fans. These populations are considered more outgoing than the Dutch, which may be an interesting factor for further research. On the other hand, it can also be that because of the smaller group of fans on Drezels.com it is not necessary to create a 'we'-feeling, for possibly they know each other already.

## 5.6.2 Interviews

To better understand what fans themselves consider as important aspects of the community, interviews were conducted. Hills (2002) implies, that executive fans can set the agenda for

other fans. In this thesis, nine out of ten interviews were conducted with Harry Potter fans (of whom one was an executive, namely a moderator), and one interview was held with a ‘boy scout’. The scout-interview is included to give a brief look at an extensive offline community and might offer supportive views or be an interesting indicator for further research. However, it is not the purpose of this thesis to understand the executive fans, therefore most fans interviews were ‘regular fans’. This thesis namely focuses on the general community construction and not a group of elite-fans within the fandom.

The candidates were gathered via Chamber of Secrets (CoS), the forum belonging to the Mugglenet.com website and by simple asking around for Harry Potters among friends. Some interviews, presented as an extensive survey, were conducted online, while others were conducted personally. The starting point of this exploration again involves the four indicators, but the interviews also yielded a new indicator; namely Meeting, by which the physical aspect of meeting up is meant. It was an assumption, that meeting up physically was less important in the Internet-era, as Putnam indicated (2000) this to be an important reason for social decline. The upcoming interviews illustrate something else than was assumed, for the interviewed community members stress the importance of still having a physical headquarter or meeting each other in real life as a precondition for a closer (offline) friendship.

‘Position’ ranked highest in the web-based research, so to detect if fans themselves put it on their agendas as an important feature, questions were asked about their involvement with the fandom. They considered Position important and offered extensive answers. Most fans replied that joining an online community was due to the lack of opportunity to discuss their love for Harry Potter offline. The forums provided a chance to meet up with like-minded:

Femke (19, Dutch): I decided to join the fan community when I realized that Harry Potter was more to me than a book. I wanted to talk about the world around Harry Potter, not just the character. **I didn’t really have friends who were interested in Harry Potter, so I had to go online to find that.**

Leah49 (28, location unknown): **I saw OOTP and could not get it out of my mind, so I looked for forums to discuss it and the upcoming release of DH.** CoS was the second forum I joined.

Not deviating from the web-analysis is that these examples illustrate the need to ‘discuss’ the object of affection and do this among like-minded people. Consequently, the interviewees were asked when they first felt part of the group. The striking difference with the scout is that he indicates this is after having the ‘physical’ means to be a member:

Mark (23, Dutch): Well, if you become a member of the scouting, you get 'installed'. First you check it out a few times, after that **you promise a vow, with your hand on the flag. After that you get your insignia and the neckerchief, and then you are part of the community.** But once you get promoted, as a leader of a group, that is a more intimate process. **I considered myself a member since I got my hat and neckerchief.**

In real life this putting up of physical attributes is possible, whereas online there is perhaps a number of posts that might indicate your membership or your discourse:

Meike (21, Dutch): At our forum, Drezels.com, you have to post a certain amount of messages, which we check. **After posting some correct messages, on topic, more 'rooms' of the forum will open.** But personally, I think if someone really likes it (Harry Potter), reads it with pleasure or likes the movies, and he considers himself a fan, then I think that is a fan too.

So the main reason they named, was considering or entitling themselves as fans, or when they started participating actively (which might be a requirement on certain forums). The neckerchief and hat from the scouts may be seen as the number of posts or questions a fans poses on the forum. The interviewees indicate there is a strong feeling of an in-group. When asking about how they see the relationships differ from 'real-life' relationships or friendships, some striking answers were given that indicate the strength of the friendships:

Arithmancer (English): In my opinion, **participating in a community of the likeminded online is a more sure way of making real, close friends, with whom to share enjoyment of life and emotional events in real life, than a lot of real life activities. The parents of my (now school-aged) children are far less likely to 'click' as well with me as people I met in the HP fandom, which really makes sense, because of the commonality of interest.** ...[she names a few friends she has made on the forum]... It is an interesting, diverse, supportive circle of friends, and very much the 'real thing', rather than a substitute for it, in my opinion.

Jayme (19, Dutch): Through the online fandom, especially RPG (role-playing-games), however, I made some great friends. **I think having a common interest is a great basis for a friendship.**

This shows how the aspect of community construction appears in their basis for friendship, namely by building up a network of like-minded people. Both fans in these examples (and in seven out of the nine Harry Potter interviews it related to this commonality) indicate this mutual interest is a starting point to build up a closer relationship. This is like the example of Arithmancer who describes that her friendship on the forum is more close than with people she sees on a daily basis in real life (though she does not even meet them physically).

Authenticity appeared to be the most occurring factor in the Dutch web-data and the Dutch fans considered this as important indicator when interviewed. They were asked about what they regarded as improvements for the fandom and what were important aspects when one wants to belong to the community. This resulted in answers about authenticity of the fans. Some fans believe every fan entering the forum should at least have some basic knowledge

about Harry Potter. Though it might be pointed out that there are fans that consider themselves to be better fans (like Jayme did as well, who did not want other people to join if they were not ‘basic’ fans):

Meike (21, Dutch): **There are fans that think they are superior. It is like, ‘I have more merchandise, so I am better’, but yeah. Then I think, you can afford it, so it is not like the one who can buy the most is the biggest fan.** [...] You can see it sometimes, that there are some fans who only see the movies and comment in a topic about the books and then they say like ‘no it’s not right, for in the movie..’, than I think like eeuuhm.. you see a difference and then it can lead to a fight in which is emphasized the other has only seen the movie, ‘you have to shut up about that, for you don’t know what happened’. **But that is just about posting in the right topics and sections actually (laughing).**

She indicates as well that younger fans sometimes have difficulties understanding the older fans:

Meike (21, Dutch): Well, the die-hard fans came here for Harry Potter once. And they have been through more than the younger fans. Like, the time we went to London (ed: for the premier of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows) with a whole group. Young fans do not understand why we did it, they are like ‘meuh, I don’t get it’. **Well, of course they don’t, because you didn’t have it that you had to wait till there was a new part of the story, when you became fan everything was out there already.**

Meike illustrates that there is a division in capital of young and old fans. The old fans, like she indicates, were waiting for the story to develop, while the younger fans could gain all capital at once if they would like to and could choose between the books and movies, the older fans just had to wait for the books (which they were doing in London). This answer already relates to the topic of Playing, which also features typically on the fans list of important indicators. Playing was a very present indicator in the comment-section data. The interviewees had to answer a question about their participation on the forum and when they felt like a full member. The act of questioning and answering was named most to indicate their level of participation and membership. Some interviewees described this as their first steps in the community and as an indicator that they felt part of the community themselves:

Merrymerge (English): I became part of the community **when I joined the forum and began posting answers to people’s questions.**

The interviewees put ‘discussion’ and ‘meaning’ high on their agendas as elements within Playing. For most interviewees it was the main reason to join the forums: they were looking for likeminded people that they could not find in their offline lives. Although meanings may be deviant, there is still a quest for mutual understanding. Leah49’s examples entail the search and acknowledgement of sharing an opinion:

Leah49 (28, English): **We are not all going to agree on everything and we need to accept that.** We try to lord our views and opinions on others. We take great offense when other people disagree. We need to stop that.

An aspect that revealed itself while conducting the interviews and that was not present in the web-data was the aspect of ‘meeting’. A physical meet-up seemed to be very important for some of the fans to continue the friendship, they had built up online, offline too. The ‘love’ for Harry Potter and the shared basis they have led to a physical meeting and to a friendship that reaches further than the forum. The scouts have a physical headquarter: a clubhouse. When it burned down in 2009 differences in the community feeling could immediately be noticed:

Mark (23, Dutch): **Well, the location is very important, everybody is always hanging around the clubhouse.** Lighting a campfire, or do some jobs. **The building brings the people together. When it was gone, the community was less close.** Yeah, there were a few trailers where you have the meeting in but it is not so fun to stick around, because nothing is there. [...] **It is like a second home for a lot of the active leaders. I even sleep there regularly.** [...] When it was gone, we still came there, but it was less. It has influence apparently. It was just not as close as before. We did not stick around, like before, so we saw each other less as well.

Thus, meeting up at the same spot was very important to the scouts. The clubhouse for the fans is the forum, but this is just a base for them to find each other. The following example also illustrates how the fan took the chance to meet a fellow fan in real life:

Arithmancer (English): My online friends that I keep in touch which, include.. [...] a married housewife and **mother of two who lives in Mumbai, India (I had the opportunity, very unexpectedly, to visit with her as result of a business trip)** [...]

The interviewees imply that if there is a chance to meet up, they want to meet up (which is not always easy, for the interviewees already ranged from the United States, to Malaysia). The scouts and the Dutch forum offer smaller, local examples, in which it is obvious that meeting entails a great aspect for increasing the community feeling and strength of the relations:

Meike (21, Dutch): Eeuh, some of the members lived in my area, so it was easy to meet up with them and we had a meeting in Maastricht. That was really nice and so I wanted to go to another meeting. **On the forum, the vibe changes as well afterwards, because you already saw each other and then you start meeting up ‘outside’ the forum too. I befriended very much with some of the members, Jessie, Roy and Anne and some others that lived in the area. I saw them more often, not just on meetings, so the group of friends expanded a lot.** It is fun to do these activities with friends, otherwise you would just do it for yourself. [...] **We even meet up now to go to book fairs together, or just shopping or to go see a movie. It is not all about Harry Potter anymore.**

Again, the shared object of interest is a starting point that leads to more, namely to having friends to gather with and to meet up. Meike’s quote even implies that it goes further than the love for Harry Potter: They also meet up to do stuff one would do with every other friend



(like shopping or going to a movie). The forum turned into their (physical) headquarter, though the meeting in real life certainly strengthened their community. The interviewees hereby introduced a new chapter, which was not visible in the analysis of the web-comments.

Besides the strong community feeling in the groups, there are certain elements that imply Othering happens too on the forums and in the scouts' community. Othering was indicated earlier as a 'measuring instrument', to compare one's stances and knowledge against their own. Fans regard some people or actions as not welcome in the community:

Sinistra\_Furze (English): Deliberately aggressive, hurtful, intolerant behavior is not welcome. Some bossy nit-picking Mods with new and enthusiastic posters can be off-putting for them.

Snapespet (English): When one acts rudely to others **who don't share their opinions**. On this site, if it happens repeatedly, the person is banned.

Snapespet's answer is very interesting, as it indicates that a difference in discourse can lead to an argument. Some fans consider this difference even a reason to not see others as a fan:

Jayme (19, Dutch): [...] **Although, I must say I have met some people who called themselves 'fans', while not knowing some basic stuff from the books.** I know not everyone has read the books over and over again, as I have, so not everyone will know the smallest details, **but there are some basic things real fans should know, as far as I'm concerned.**

She indicates clearly that other fans have to show at least some basic knowledge when they enter the fandom and want to participate. Every forum has its rules and the members joining should stick to that, so most of the interviewees named this as key reason for not being welcome. However, striking in the interviews is that among themselves Othering occurs, but seems to be controlled. In scouting there is a strict structure, though the adult leading the group is the one in control and the 'cubs' are trained to have responsibility for each other:

Mark (23, Dutch): Once you enter a group, it is strictly subdivided. See, every age group has its own name and activities. You start out as a cub-scout, in which you belong to a pack of cub-scouts. **Every pack has a guide, an older cub, aged 11-12, that has responsibility for the pack. The leader points out who is responsible, because you are old and wise enough to do so.** And if you are a little less wise you can become a helper, the one who helps the guide. [...] **It is not a democratic process no, because you cannot let children vote.**

The scout leader ultimately holds the final verdict, which is similar to the forum's moderator.

To have more control and structure on a forum, sections can be pre-defined for the fans:

Arithmancer (English): **Within this broad group there are factions, clubs, groups of friends, etc. with which I am more tightly affiliated.** The fans I associate with, mostly love the character of professor Snape [...] There are also groups of younger fans, groups of mainly movie fans, groups of fans centered around other characters, fan artists etc.

The structure in the community may be a possibility to control the group and avoid Othering or may be a reason to Other. Among the interviewees it can be stated that both options occur. Again, the identifier Othering is present, but does not seem to play a very common role in the groups.

### 5.6.3 Conclusion

The low score of Othering in both the web-analyses and the interviews indicates that this process is present, but not favorable or exerted much. From the interviews, it can be stated that Position and Playing again played a great role, but Meeting, the indicator introduced by the interviewees, formed a new significant feature. Both analyses showed fans mainly try and look for mutual factors and shared knowledge, or how to create this. In the interview-data it was striking to see that the physical location and meeting played such a great role. This might suggest that a forum is, like Putnam (2000) argues, a new possible ground for meeting and increasing social connectedness. For a forum is a 'digital headquarter', which allows members to get involved, but also offers the opportunity to extend their connections further.

Conclusions also have to be drawn on the highest scoring elements within the indicators. Within Position the elements in-group and nobles scored highest. This was the score for both data-samples and also holds for the interviews. It might show that within the fandom, to construct a community, most fans try to create a 'we-feeling' and acknowledge there are some well-known figures that take the lead. It can also be argued that there is a need for a leader, a need for executive fans, who, as Bourdieu argued (1986), are nobles that indeed represent and defend the community. Taking the example from the scouting community: the leader has the final verdict, although the (cub)scouts can contribute (own) ideas.

Another element that was present in all data samples within the indicator Othering was 'Othering producers/ Warner Brothers'. The fact that this element is highlighted illustrates that fans problematize at the 'higher' power and the 'industry'. This is in vein with the grouping Levy (2001) describes, namely the collective intelligence the fans share and their ability to stand up and unite against the industry. The shared emotional investment and reading of the text form their strong ties, which cause them giving off at the producers. The reading from fans is seen as the authentic way and their understanding of the Harry Potter series is 'better' than that of the producers. Although the fans differ and compete over meaning, reading and knowledge (Hills, 2002), they apparently do not like the higher authorities to change 'their' passion. This was seen in the interviews by Othering moderators.

The fans either Other other fans for not being fan enough, or for having a different style of fanship, but they see Warner Brothers as the ones who do not understand the series completely and change too much of their reading. This standing up against the industry together is also a mutual factor.

Their own knowledge, and subsequent subcultural capital or Authenticity, is in both data samples mainly based on the movies. This may be because the analyzed comments were related to news about the movies. The element also brought up differences in reading, but at the same time this showed the quest for mutuality and the liquidity of capital too. As most fans have already a shared reading, some search to adapt a reading or just defend their own (deviating) reading. These aspects also tie the community together and make up a community, according to Hills (2002) who states a community is constituted by affect, attachment, passion and commodification. This competition, but also sharing of readings also brought along discussion of the knowledge of the movies, bringing along illustrations of the last indicator, Playing.

Within Playing the element 'Questioning' featured most often in all data samples. This is a very important factor for community construction, as questioning shows the willingness to 'play' and thus learn, participate and discuss. It is all about being active within the fandom and participating actively. It is a way of feeling part of a community, which Van Zoonen (2007) indicated as a new type of citizenship. It is a way of getting and giving attention to other community members, to look for like-minded fans and the ability to create a shared consensus while looking for the answer to the questions and the discussions they can bring along.

## **6. Conclusion: Voting for the greater good**

### **“We seize control for the greater good” (Grindelwald)**

The objective of this thesis was to map how we can learn from fan cultures in relation to politics. It did so by exploring the role of community construction and social capital within the Harry Potter fandom. The results of this thesis may offer ideas that can help restoring active engagement within the democracy. It contributes to understanding the entertainization of society and provides an insight in the renewing relationship of politics and entertainment in contemporary culture. To understand this relationship better and to learn from it in ‘real life politics’, this thesis focused on how a community is constructed and how social capital plays a role within that creation. It was assumed, that by exploring a fandom, fan practices would be comparable with political processes. A fandom is a micro-democracy (Jenkins, 2006), which shows, as was seen in the results of this thesis, strong cohesion, because of the mutual object of affection. This makes it interesting to understand the workings of a fandom for political ends. In order to extend this idea, the example of Harry Potter fans was used as a case and it was used to explore the process made it possible to look at the concept of the fan democracy and how this thesis helps expanding that idea. This chapter suggests, besides a conclusion, some further points of focus and a reflection on the limitations of this study.

#### **6.1 Imagining the Fan Democracy?**

It can be concluded that this thesis draws on three themes. First of all, it draws on the celebratory vision of the fan democracy, which fits with the entertainization of society, as suggested by Van Zoonen (2004, 2007). This vision entails a positive view on the convergence of ‘high’ traditional and ‘low’ popular culture. The relationship between politics and fan cultures is such a convergence that makes up a subject of study within this field. The goal of this thesis is to map and contribute to that vision, by explaining how a fan democracy can teach or make us understand real-life politics better. The second theme within this thesis is ‘fan cultures’, which is a field within Cultural Studies that has not been thoroughly explored yet. The contribution of this thesis to that sphere, is that this thesis introduces the political theory of Putnam into fan (culture) studies. By extending Putnam to fan culture, it allowed this thesis to map political involvement in contemporary culture and make it a means of comparison to the status quo of community life within fan communities. Bourdieu has been

used before, though his concept of social capital has not often been applied to community construction or power relations within a fandom yet. The last theme, namely the concepts of community construction and social capital, were given meaning by the results of the research done for this thesis. Drawing on the theories of Bourdieu (1986, 2010), Putnam (2000), Jenkins (1992, 1996, 2006) and Hills (2002), a new definition of social capital, applicable to understand community construction, was defined.

The celebratory vision on the entertainization of society suggests we can learn from the convergence of traditional and popular culture. An aspect in which this becomes visible is Van Zoonen's (2007) creation of a new type of citizenship, namely that of belonging to a community. The idea fits in the postmodern society we live in, but also brings along new difficulties, for when is one part of the community? Therefore, this thesis focused on that process: Community construction and what factors emerge and contribute to this creation. Social capital, as argued by Williams (2004), played a great role in this. But before elaborating on that role, as confirmed by the results of this thesis, it is important to look at the process of convergence. Van Zoonen (2004:46) does not strive for recognition or confirmation that fan practices and political practices are alike, but that there are similarities to be acknowledged. This thesis looked at certain similarities and provided an insight in the fan practices, from where these similarities can be drawn. A fan is strongly involved with a text, which shows in his knowledge or participation within the community. Thereby he makes time to participate in it, thus invests in it as individual. Though many individuals with the same passion can form a greater unit, which can unite and even – if necessary – stand up against an idea (Levy, 2001, Hills, 2002). Fans share in discussions, assess the object of fandom, and come up with alternatives. They spread and share information, discuss and assess the text; features both Jenkins (1992) and Van Zoonen (2004) claim to be similarities with political practices. The data researched in this thesis showed this both in the interviews that were held and in the analysis of the news comments. This will be elaborated on when discussing the four indicators that formed the backbone of the research.

As stated by Fiske (1992), a fandom can be approached as shadow cultural economy and therefore the power relations of a fandom are illustrative of those relations in real life and politics. A fandom may be held together, because of people sharing the same affect, attachment and passion for a subject, as Hills (2002) constitutes this makes a fandom, they also compete with each other. This competition is not directly about power, but about who can

offer the 'best' reading of a text. Thus, how one adapts a specific lingo, value system and interprets or assesses a text (Rogozinska, 2007). That competition shows in their discourse, hence the choice for this thesis to perform a discourse analysis of the news comments. As Baym (1999) implies negotiations form part of the ongoing process of community construction and these negotiations take place in the own messages of fans. Therefore it was necessary to look at the 'raw', naturally occurring data. This competition and thereby, perhaps unconsciously, community construction can lead to a strong bond of the fans. They construct a community that draws on a mutual understanding or shared love for Harry Potter. The results of this thesis present this process and the indicators or characteristics that are relevant in this creation.

Assuming that social capital, the network one has, plays a role within community creation (Williams, 2004), there had to be factors that characterized how this network was made up. These factors were found in previous theories and studies, done by Bourdieu (1986, 2010), Putnam (2000), Jenkins (1992, 2006) and Hills (2002). Bourdieu's theory of classification of capitals was used to indicate Authenticity of fans and their knowledge (subcultural capital), which makes up their shared factor in the first place; shared knowledge. This is related to their reading, which they compete over. The Bourdieuan vision was criticized by Hills, which he tried to improve by suggesting fans 'Play'. They move around and can change positions, gain (or lose) capital and authenticity. However, by gaining more capital, one could either feel as if they belonged more in the group (indicating Putnam's factor of Position) or be excluded for their knowledge or deviant reading, which indicates Jenkins' factor of Othering. A critique of this must be given as well, for saying a fan can either be in or out of a group implies 'moral dualism', an Us versus Them perspective, while there are many ways in between (Hills, 2002). That is what this study deals with as well: by classifying the fans and the using of the indicators as stratification means, a moral dualism can be implied. Another critique of this thesis is that within the used method of discourse analysis, it is difficult to see online (in the raw data) what the real purpose or tone of voice from the fan was. For a fan can 'sound' cocky online in showing off Authenticity and lecturing another fan to have another reading, but this might not have been the intention of the fan.

Thus, to see how community construction was accomplished within a fandom and thereby focusing on the role of social capital, four indicators were used: Position, Authenticity, Playing and Othering. The results of the analysis provide a look at how the community is

constructed, using the concept of social capital gives and the results give an overview of how fans find their way within the fandom. In that way the analysis made clear how social capital could be linked to social cohesion, to support and to integration. They are three factors that, according to Van Zoonen (2004), are important to get a clearer understanding of real-life democracy and form the link between fan cultures and politics.

The factors of social capital are also related to what is described in this thesis as a Bourdieuan perspective or a Putnamian perspective. Bourdieu's hierarchical vision of social capital versus Putnam's integration vision, which were again related to Jenkins' vision of Othering (and thereby creating a hierarchy within the community) and Hills' idea of playing (changing positions, thus making the concept liquid). It can be concluded that both perspectives were present within the fandom, though the integration perspective describes the explored Harry Potter fandoms better. The Bourdieuan view was present within the indicators of Position and Othering. Within the explored fandom a group of 'leaders' could be distinguished, or at least a few well-known and active fans. Relating this result to real-world politics, it might show that there needs to be (or is a need for) a pioneer that arranges and organizes the (rules of) engagement of the fandom. Although these fans were not always liked, for the 'elites' did not always have a good status, as long as they do not differ or appear to differ from the fans themselves, they will be accepted in their position. Although this does not work for a group of 'higher forces', because the industry (Warner Brothers and the producers for instance) was not liked. According to the fans, they tried to change too much. This can be translated to a political view if a party would change their stance or goes along with another party in parliament where voters would not approve of immediately. This thesis does not address how to solve these issues, that would be interesting for further research, but it provides the idea that equality is a great factor and that cohesion is created by sharing opinions or readings of subjects. Thus, mutuality is the keyword in constructing the community. This mutuality can be reached by Playing, and by giving others the option to gain more capital and authenticity, which is related to Putnam's view.

The integration perspective of Putnam appeared in the indicators Playing, Position and Authenticity. The integration view stressed the liquidity of social capital. Fans had a certain position or choose one themselves by Playing. By playing they could gain more capital and become more authentic, or choose just to give in and continue in that position. The most important aspect was the frequent presence of the indicator Position, which can be explained by the strong 'we-discourse' found in the international comments. This discourse namely

indicates a strong, shared feeling of equality among the fans, which can be helpful in creating a community. That the language-bound DreuZels.com sample highlighted Authenticity as main indicator was a striking result, though not confusing, for the Dutch samples mainly entailed stand-alone comments and less interaction than the international sample. Translating this result to ‘real world’ politics shows the importance of a basis of mutual understanding or even knowledge to create a successful community. Thus, in politics it may indeed be necessary to agree on some political stances and know about them before trying to create a strong group. Interesting in the choice of samples used in this thesis, namely the comments of a news website and not the forums. This shows that even besides the diversity of the audience, it is possible to construct a community with a broad, diverse group.

Interestingly, the interviews brought up a new indicator: the interviewees considered the physical meet-up still to be one of the most important factors. This contributed to their friendships and relations, and even took them from solely existing online to offline friendships too. Having a physical headquarter seems important, for it offers a chance to get together and to share again. The activities they do ‘offline’ are not different from the participation they perform online (they share and discuss, though it extends beyond just the object of affection). This thesis did not expand on this indicator much, because the interviews were used to see what fans themselves considered to be important factors, and thereby it offered material to compare. Certainly, the interviews still hold interesting points for further research.

## **6.2 Discussion**

This thesis focused on community construction within the fandom and how it can be translated into ‘real world’ politics. Several study limitations occurred while researching that introduce opportunities for further research. To see how the community is constructed, this thesis draws heavily on the concept of social capital, introduced by Bourdieu and Putnam. It is the first time that a fan culture is approached with Putnam’s theory, which on its own makes it interesting to further explore Putnam’s vision of social cohesion in an online fandom. That is, Putnam states that the online platform might be a new sphere to create more cohesion. This thesis took news messages on a website as example, but a forum of a website could be constructed in another way or just by interviewing a group of fans another way of community construction and cohesion could be visible. As already tentatively visible in the results of the interviews, the forum group (or role-playing group) was closer and showed different results in



hierarchy. This is interesting to investigate further in relation to politics, because it may indicate how a group is kept together, which is socially relevant in a society where more and more distinction of politics and fragmentation takes place.

Another interesting point to explore the current status quo of social cohesion is to compare a fandom to an offline community. This thesis already addressed the example of the scouting community. It might be interesting to look at other communities that are still active and where participation is still high. To see how these communities are organized and maintained, may contain some lessons on getting people more actively engaged outside that community. Most community populations are diverse in nature and brought together by a shared factor, thus it can be explored how strong the mutuality within these communities is and how they maintain it.

Within this thesis, the websites made up the biggest samples. Because of the open character of these websites and especially the news sections that are available to everyone, it can be argued that these are posted in a public sphere. Habermas (1986) argues that the public sphere is a discursive platform in which individuals or groups meet to discuss subjects of mutual interest (and if possible or necessary reach a shared conclusion about it). Again, related to Putnam, how does this work in a 'real' public, offline sphere? Or how do the online public spheres differ? The thesis assessed an international sample and a language-bound example. Both showed a different result, which might indicate there are more layers of differences. For instance, cultural differences could play a role. This thesis did not address those factors, because it was not visible or necessary to explore. It could be very appealing, though, to perform offline interviews and include the cultural background of participants and explore how these differences relate to their levels of engagement.

Lastly, it would be interesting to conduct interviews and consider fan activism. During the interviews conducted for this thesis, a lot of fascinating material was produced that not all could be used in this thesis. Mutuality was indicated as the factor that held this fandom together. Making this thesis a longitudinal study, it might be insightful to return to this fandom sometime after the last movie screened. Then the mutual factor really can be measured, because if there is no cohesion at all anymore after the mutual factor diminished, this might also provide a fascinating point for real-world politics. Imagine a political party changing image and choosing a new leader? What if the old leader was the mutual factor? The same goes for Harry Potter fans, some fans indicated in their interviews that they were afraid that after the last movie would come out, the fandom will slowly diminish or even fade away.

### 6.3 Final thoughts

Based on the results of this thesis, it can be stated that if the analyzed Harry Potter fans were to form a democracy, they would succeed. There would still be competition, but that would be ruled out by the cohesion and strong shared investment and meaning of the fans. What this thesis taught us by converging a feature of popular culture with the tradition of politics is that a shared starting point or mutual factors give a feeling of belonging to a community. A community cannot succeed without having at least some shared aspects. Of course, within the community there is room for competition, struggle and ‘playing’. Playing entails a very important aspect, as was shown by the results of this thesis. Firstly, it gives a chance to change positions within the fandom, from becoming a passive participant to an active one, or the other way around. This can also be the case with a voter; A voter that may not vote for years, because he of several reasons, may all of a sudden do so, because he recognizes a shared element with a political party or leader. Secondly, playing gives the fan the opportunity to gain knowledge or take in an authentic position within the fandom. This can mean, when translated to real life politics, that a voter has become more informed or more interested in the stances by others within his or her network for instance.

By not taking an online forum as a focus point for the analysis, but researching within the news comment section of website, it is clear that the approached group can be diverse in background, yet still create a shared consensus. Though, as already implied by Jenkins (2002), the fans discussing and evaluating may also *not* lead to shared consensus, because beliefs are sometimes accepted by everyone and thereby they form a suitable example for the micro-democracy. Thus, a diverse group of possible voters may be tied together when even a loose, but mutual reading is created. For the sole fact that they are discussing and sharing suggests, as proven with this thesis, the first steps of the (ongoing) creation of a community.

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## **Appendix A**

### ***Coding Scheme & Case study Methodology***

To discover how the community is constructed and how social capital plays a role within that, four indicators are identified as aspects contributing to the concept of social capital. Before looking at these identifiers, social capital is in this defined as:

Social capital is characterized by the acquired number of connections; the position the person takes up within the group (a person can be privileged or seen as the Other, besides fitting in the in-group), and the amount of symbolic capital one has gathered (which indicates the level of authenticity). Social capital is not a fixed type of capital, for one can 'play' and therefore change his or her amount of capital; it is a liquid concept.

As can be read in this definition, social capital is consistent of four indicators; position, Othering, authenticity and playing. In order to explain how these indicator are identified within the analysis, it is necessary to see how these indicators can be explained:

#### **Indicator 1: Position**

Position is about the status or role a fan entitles himself or is entitled by other fans. A fan can be placed or seen as 'higher' in rank than other fans (called nobiles in the Bourdieuan perspective). Another element is that fans can talk about 'we' or 'us'; by which they mean the fandom itself and the group they feel they belong to (or the place they take in within this group, like shippers or spoiler-fans). Fights are another element within the indicator Position, they can occur as well among fans, as excluding themselves from a certain group. The last element is the referral to other websites, which shows that they see the fandom as a larger part than Mugglenet.com or Dreuzels.com alone and therewith not favor a specific website.

#### **Indicator 2: Othering**

The concept of Othering is described in this thesis as how fans discuss and 'exclude' people that are 'not as fan as they are'. This process in their discourse can be a means to measure their own 'fanship' to someone else's. After analyzing the messages on the identifier of Othering, it showed that Othering can happen at several levels. Fans may other the 'outside world', which can be anyone outside the fandom, or a regular movie-fan or a book-reader. They Other spoiler fans (fans who spoil elements of the Deathly Hallows part II), the Other the producers of the movie (Warner Brothers) or its director (David Yates) by accusing them

of not ‘understanding’ (performing the correct reading) enough about the Harry Potter series or adapting too much elements so the movie differs too much from the books. The last element to be found in the process of Othering was Othering among themselves, thus other fans who did not have the same amount of knowledge or fans that differ in their reading from the series.

### **Indicator 3: Authenticity (subcultural capital)**

The third indicator explored is Authenticity or the presence of subcultural capital in the comments. Subcultural capital is one of the types of capital invented by Bourdieu (1986) to indicate a certain knowledge of a sub-field of a subject. This can be either gained by the fans themselves and build up by participation within the fandom and affection with the object of fandom (e.g. reading about it, watching all movies, reading all books, knowing the characters and knowing the actors). On the other hand, it is also partly made up of symbolic capital; the level of prestige or the status a fan earns/has addressed by other fans. Besides the addressing from other fans, a fan can also claim these capitals by himself, by trying to be wiser or more knowledgeable than the other fans. They even might claim a status themselves. These capitals can make one fan more authentic than the other; therefore this indicator is named Authenticity.

### **Indicator 4: Playing**

The last indicator to be explored is the concept of ‘playing’. Playing is the indicator wherein the liquidity of the fandom will appear the most, for it entails how fans ‘play’ move around in the fandom. They can play to increase their knowledge, they can play to become part of a group, but they can also choose not to be active and lurk. Within the indicator Playing again several elements were discovered; the act of spoiling can also be related to playing, fans share their meaning or ‘lecture’ it to other fans and they can also lecture their reading of the series to other fans. However, the easiest way to play within the fandom is by asking questions or answering to questions from other fans.

As an illustration for the methodology explained in chapter four, a case study is presented to show the indicators and the method which be used to perform the discourse analysis on the online messages:



**o0Amy0o** (@reply, indicating a direct reply and entails position)- **Reading it, it seems to say everything that happens in the boat house will be viewable from the Crystal House. To me that says Snape dies in the Boat House** (authenticity, for it indicates Quirrelmort knows about the Crystal House and that it is originally the place where Snape dies, not the Boat House), but it's not very clear, so, I'm unsure (Playing: for it entails the element of meaning; I'm unsure).

However, I'm sure **Andrew knows** (Position again, for he refers to Andrew, the 'nobile' and owner of Mugglenet.com). **Remember in his set report for Part 1 he said that there was something that hte film-makers changed that would upset some fans and wouldn't bother others?** (Again, Authenticity; for he refers to a 'set report' he has read before) I've got a feeling this is it.

EXAMPLE 1	
<b>Name</b>	Quirrelmort
<b>Country</b>	UK
<b>Number of posts</b>	79
<b>Position</b>	Yes: direct reply to Amy, recognition of Andrew as 'elite', by stating his name and indicating he's sure Andrew knows
<b>Othering</b>	Yes: 'changed that would upset some fans and wouldn't bother others': this could indicate the element of othering among the fans self
<b>Authenticity</b>	Yes: see bold parts in the post, Quirrelmort shows he knows the original location of Snape's Death (Crystal House) and not the Boat House, though the clip showed, indicates it might be the Boat House. Plus, he writes about a set report for Part 1, written by Andrew (which also claims he knows Andrew's position as owner of Mugglenet)
<b>Playing</b>	Yes: indicating element of meaning 'I'm unsure', because it's a reaction to the comment on the change of the Crystal House and the Boat House, and 'I'm sure', because this is followed by the element of Andrew's report Quirrelmort knows of

2) Posted by: [quest1234](#) - Posted on: 2011-01-18 14:32:04

I fully agree with **QuirrelMort! The films are a part of the Harry Potter franchise. It's not just books** (recognition of the total franchise, authenticity; for the fan acknowledges there is the world of books and the world of movies). **If you don't like the movies because they aren't like the books, then you aren't a true Potter fan** ('true fan'; clearly Othering, because there is a distinction made between true fans and apparently not-true fans).

EXAMPLE 2	
<b>Name</b>	Guest1234

<b>Country</b>	Unknown
<b>Number of posts</b>	Nav
<b>Position</b>	Yes: agreeing with another fan and @-replying to them
<b>Othering</b>	Yes: by stating that 'If you don't like the movies, because they aren't like the books, then you aren't a true Potter fan. Thus, this fan makes a distinction between book and movie-fans and others within the fandom.
<b>Authenticity</b>	Yes: claims self 'the films are a part of the franchise, stating this like it is a fact'
<b>Playing</b>	No

These cases are explicatory: it is visible fans communicate with each other by means of direct replies in which they show their amount of symbolic capital which can create 'Othering' or can be used to 'play'. Authenticity plays a role, for this seems to relate to the status of these fans and the reactions they get and give. Some fans keep returning and replying to messages and questions from others. Some are 'known' because of this and build up a name within the community or the participants that take part in the discussions. Therefore it is important to look at the total context of the comments too and not just 'loose' examples.

## Appendix B

### *Interviews: topic list*

**Fan interview** (as posted online as survey on Chamber of Secrets, the forum belonging to Mugglenet.com)

- 1) **Interest** in Harry Potter: How (and when) did you get interested in Harry Potter?
  
- 2) **Joining** forum: Why (and when) did you decide to join the forum?
  
- 3) Considering feeling **part of the community**: When do you consider someone to be part of the community or when did you see yourself as part of the community?
  
- 4) **Activities**: Could you describe the activities you do/participate in within/related to the forum?
  
- 5) **Relations** within the community: How do you feel about the community? Could you tell me something about friendships/relationship you've built up inside the group compared to relationships you undertake outside the community? And what about your position/feeling being part of the community. Lastly, could you also tell something about the community itself related to these subjects..
  
- 6) Community as **company**: Imagine the community as a company, who would you state to be at the top of the line (the big boss), managers, who are the employees and who are the freelancers?
  
- 7) **Bonding** in the community: What do you think ties the community together? (and if you answer our love for Harry Potter, please explain how and what about this love ties you together)
  
- 8) **Improvements**? Could you name a factor which could be improved in the community?
  
- 9) **Not welcome**? When is one not welcome in the community?
  
- 10) **End**: Is there an 'end' for this community? (E.g. because you get too old for it...)

## **Scouts interview**

- 1) How (and when) did you get interested in scouting?
  
- 2) Why (and when) did you decide to join the scouting community?
  
- 3) When do you consider someone to be part of the community or when did you see yourself as part of the community?
  
- 4) Could you describe the activities you do/participate in within/related to scouting?
  
- 5) How do you feel about the community? Could you tell me something about friendships/relationship you've built up inside the group compared to relationships you undertake outside the community? And what about your position/feeling being part of the community. Lastly, could you also tell something about the community itself related to these subjects..
  
- 6) Imagine the community as a company, who would you state to be at the top of the line (the big boss), managers, who are the employees and who are the freelancers?
  
- 7) What do you think ties the community together? (and if you answer our love for scouting/nature/outdoor events, please explain how and what about this love ties you together)
  
- 8) Could you name a factor which could be improved in the community?
  
- 9) When is one not welcome in the community?
  
- 10) Is there an 'end' for this community? (E.g. because you get too old for it...)

## Appendix C

This appendix contains the original and translated data samples from the Dutch samples that were used from the Dreuzels.com website. The interviews are not included in total, because of their extensive length. Original samples and translations are included per (sub)paragraph.

### 5.1 Acquired connections: Direct replies within Mugglenet.com and Dreuzels.com

My First reaction about this scene with Hermione & Ron: KAREN GOES CRAZY!!! Hahaa, GO Karen, run after him! I really think they should have kept in the scene with the Dudleys, the others are idd nice as extra's.

[ Original in Dutch: Mijn eerste reactie over de scene met Hermelien en Ron: KAREN WORDT ZOT!!! hahaa Go Karen run after him! Ik vind die eerste scene met de Duffelingen echt iets dat ze hadden moeten er in laten, die andere zijn idd voor de extra's leuk.]

Wicked – 3 Apr 2011 om 16:20

LOL:P And I try to constrain myself so hard in the news comments ^^ But secretly I think: DAMN RUPERT IS HOT! :O

[Lol :P En ik probeer me nog zo goed in te houden in de nieuwsberichten ^^ Maar stiekem denk ik: DAMN RUPERT IS JAMMIE! :O]

Karen - 3 Apr 2011 om 18:02

### 5.2.2 Position within Dreuzels.com

@Sander Postema

It was already suggested by **Karen**. [...] (Dutch: dat werd al gesuggereerd door Karen.)

Weasley1

19 Mar 2011 om 7:49

**Why is nobody** enthusiast about the shots of Snape? That went above expectation! Snape at the Potter-house? And a last shot a saving Lilly? Stop Voldemort? [...] (Dutch: Waarom is er niemand enthousiast over de shorts van Snape!!! Dit ging echt al mijn verwachtingen te boven! Sneep bij het huis van de Potters???)

Een laatste poging om Lilly te redden?! Voldemort tegen te houden? [...])

nielsgroffen

21 Mar 2011 om 22:39

I read the review of **Leaky** through already, because I do not want to know too much, but I already know it is going to be a great movie. (Dutch: ik heb het verslag van leaky een beetje snel doorgelezen want ik wil niet te veel weten maar ik heb nu heel veel vertrouwen dat het een geweldige film gaat worden.)

3 Apr 2011 om 14:49

### 5.3.2 Othering within Dreuzels.com

I do not know if I am seeing it straight, but if you pause at the piece where Freds body is, it is just like he does not have an ear. Maybe they let George die in the movie? **They** change more things. (Dutch: ik weet niet of ik helemaal scheel ben of zoiets maar als je op pauze drukt bij het stukje met freds lijk lijkt het net of hij geen oor heeft. misschien hebben ze in de film george dood laten gaan? ze veranderen wel meer.)

cyriel

18 Mar 2011 om 20:27

I think it is a shame that they cut the scene of the threesome, because then **people wo did not read the books** would have understood that scene better i think and the scene of mr

Weasley was really funny, they should have let that in too (Dutch: ik vind het jammer dat dat stukje eruit is geknipt van het trio want dan zouden mensen die de boeken niet hebben gelezen het beter begrijpen denk ik en die scene van meneer wemel was echt grappig die hadden ze er ook in moeten laten zitten)

3 Apr 2011 om 14:38

@Tamara It is nice that these clips are put up too. Some of us do like to see that. If there are no new clips for part 2 yet, it is hard to put them on right. (Dutch: Het is toch leuk dat die filmpjes er ook bij staan. Sommigen vinden dat wél leuk om te zien. Als er geen nieuwe beelden komen van part 2 kan Karen die er ook moeilijk op zetten.)

Anieck

#### 5.4.2 Authenticity within Drezels.com

She could have spoken a bit more clear, couldn't she? :D **I did not think of it as a shocking scene because I already read the script and there is no music with this scene, so...** [...]

(Dutch: Ze had wel iets duidelijker mogen spreken, niet? :D Voor mij was het niet echt een schokkende scene want ik had het script al gelezen en er zit hier zelfs geen muziek bij, dus...)

Vincent

25 Mar 2011 om 15:46

15th of July for the US and UK, 14 for the Netherlands, 13th of July for Belgium ;) Ginny's scream gave me goosebumps! And all the other images xD **Also the music, that is the 'Snape to Malfoy manor' track from part I that they played at the beginning :P** (Dutch: 15 juli voor VS en Engeland, 14 juli voor Nederland, 13 juli voor België ;) Ik kreeg kippenvel van Ginny's schreeuw! En van alle andere beelden xD Ook van de muziek, dat is de track 'Snape to Malfoy Manor' uit Part I die ze spelen in het begin :P)

Karen

18 Mar 2011 om 8:29

Too bad this is not in the movie like it happened in the book and it should have been in. (Dutch: jammer dat dit niet in de film is verwerkt zo is het ook in het boek en het had dr echt bij gemoeten)

Ramona

25 Mar 2011 om 23:04

#### 5.5.2 Playing within Drezels.com

@ward

**It is not filmed in that particular order, remember?** You can see they are still wearing the clothes they wore in the Ministry and Karen also put it in the description, they dive into the fire place as they flee from the Ministry of Magic in Part I. (Dutch: Het is niet op volgorde gefilmd hé. Je kunt toch zien dat ze de kleren van het Ministerie aan hebben en Karen heeft het er ook de beschrijving bijgezet, ze duiken in de haard als ze vluchten uit het Ministerie van Toverkunst in Part 1.)

Anieck

19 Mar 2011 om 22:38

Oh yeah, didn't read that, I'm noticing it now, very nice! (Dutch: oja nie geliezen. Ik merk nu ook op very nice!)

ward

19 Mar 2011 om 23:16

**I think** it's a great scene. On the one side it is too bad it got cut out, on the Other hand it is not. **I think** the opening scene is much better now, **I think** the text at the beginning would spoil it a bit. I don't know, it is better this way. (Dutch: Ik vind het een geweldige scène. Aan de ene kant jammer dat die deruit is gehaald, aan de andere kant niet. Ik denk dat de

openingsscène veel mooier is nu, ik denk dat die tekst het een beetje zou verpetsen. Ik weet niet, 't is wel beter zo.)

Anieck

These scenes are super! I really had to cry when i read fred would die, now I'm seeing that on screen and I already had tears in my eyes so with the movie I'm gonna cry like a baby. **Is it Ron that bends over Fred by the way?** (Dutch: de beelden zijn echt supervet!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
Echt ik moest janken toen ik las dat fred dood ging nu zie ik een beeld dus had ik al de tranen in mn ogen dus met de film zullen de tranen echt over mn wangen rollen. is dat nou ron trouwens wie daar over fred heen buigt?????)

hp-fan

18 Mar 2011 om 17:52

@ hp-fan

**Yes, that is Ron.** [...] (Dutch: ja dat is Ron. [...])

Annelot

18 Mar 2011 om 18:05