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“I WANTED HER DEAD MORE THAN VOLDEMORT”: EXAMINING PEOPLE’S  
HATRED OF DOLORES UMBRIDGE

by

Jessica Griffeth

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

English

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2019

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## ABSTRACT

“I wanted her dead more than Voldemort”: Examining People’s Hatred of Dolores

Umbridge

by

Jessica Griffeth, Master of Arts

Utah State University, 2019

Major Professor: Dr. Christine Cooper-Rompato  
Department: English

This Plan B thesis explores the question: Why do audience members detest Dolores Umbridge so much? Dolores Umbridge is an incredibly hated woman in the *Harry Potter* series who has attracted attention from audiences, but Umbridge has not been studied fully by scholarship. When scholars do discuss Umbridge, they typically focus on her cruelty while ignoring her other characteristics. Looking at popular internet audience reactions to Umbridge, however, shows the complexities of Umbridge’s character by revealing what Louise Rosenblatt calls the “transaction” between the audience and the texts, and scholarship has ignored that “transaction.” Using quantitative and qualitative methods to analyze audience comments on six different internet forums, I found audience members claim to hate Umbridge because she is a cruel woman and they can relate her to other people in their lives, but analyzing the comments shows audience members also detest Umbridge because she breaks stereotypical gender roles. Because Umbridge is a woman, her cruelty is perceived more harshly, and people compare her to women in their lives. Thus, gender is central to the negative interpretation of Dolores Umbridge. Using the *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* book and film and the

*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* book and film (those texts in which Umbridge appears), I explore the “transaction” between the audience and the texts. Based on that transaction, *Harry Potter* scholarship should focus more on Umbridge’s gender specifically and on popular internet audience reactions overall.

(60 pages)

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I give special thanks to my family, friends, and colleagues for their encouragement, moral support, and patience as I discussed Dolores Umbridge much more than should be allowed and worked my way from the initial proposal writing to this final document. I could not have done it without all of you! I also want to thank all the people who became excited when I told them about my project. Your enthusiasm was encouraging and helped me keep moving forward.

Jessica Griffeth

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“I wanted her dead more than Voldemort”:

## Examining People’s Hatred of Dolores Umbridge

### “Hem Hem”: An Introduction

Dolores Umbridge is one of the most hated characters in the *Harry Potter* series. The Twitter hashtag #umbitch has particularly scathing comments about her. @durrrin says, “#Umbitch seriously irks me and puts me in a bad mood. I want to hit her with my car and then just drag her around behind it.” @SarahMRiddle says, “I would just like to reiterate how much I detest Dolores Umbridge on a cellular level.” Who is this incredibly hated woman? Dolores Umbridge is a female antagonist in the *Harry Potter* series by J.K. Rowling, and people often say they despise her more than Voldemort, the main antagonist in the series who killed Harry’s parents and wants to bring about the *Harry Potter* version of the Apocalypse. Umbridge is a power-hungry woman who works for the Ministry of Magic (the *Harry Potter* form of government), but she gets a job at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry as the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher when Dumbledore, the Hogwarts headmaster, cannot find a replacement teacher. Umbridge makes the lives of the Hogwarts students miserable as she prevents students from using magic in her classroom, imposes draconian rules, and tortures students with a magical quill that uses the writer’s blood as ink.

Despite fans’ focus on Umbridge, scholarship has largely ignored her. Hundreds of articles, essays, and books have been written about the *Harry Potter* series, but only seven scholars have examined Umbridge. Of the seven scholars who have discussed Umbridge, all of them mention her in relation to power. Gregory Bassham describes Umbridge as a “twisted, power-hungry racial supremacist who tries to undermine any

effective education at the school” (217). In a co-authored essay, David Williams and Alan Kellner view Umbridge as a ruler and explain that her horrendous torment tactics “reveal her inner lust for power” (134). Bill McCarron sees Umbridge as a ruler and states she is “a High Inquisitor whom anyone can take offense at” because of her “vicious decrees” (6). Heather Debling, in an article discussing trauma testimony, focuses on Umbridge’s power and explains that Umbridge “uses her position as High Inquisitor, her educational decrees and her Inquisitorial Squad to silence” Harry’s testimony, which is an act of cruelty (77). Leslee Friedman also looks at Umbridge’s educational decrees, but she states Umbridge uses the decrees to effect “a suppression of students’ freedom,” which is similar to Debling’s analysis of Umbridge (199). Anne Collins Smith briefly mentions Umbridge’s gender, but she also focuses on power and explains that Umbridge commands “as much fear and respect as any of the male Death Eaters” (154). These scholars’ focus on power is detrimental to Umbridge scholarship.

Whereas the scholars discussing Umbridge mainly focus on her power (with her cruelty, racism, and gender peppered in), an analysis of the audience’s perceptions of Umbridge shows they are focused on her gender, her cruelty, and her relatability.<sup>1</sup> In my thesis, I argue that audience interpretations of Umbridge are valuable to understanding her character and that scholarship on Umbridge should focus more on gender. Because Umbridge is a woman, the audience perceives her cruelty more harshly as a result of the

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<sup>1</sup> When I use the term “audience” in this thesis, I mean a popular audience, many of whom comment online.

way she manipulates gender roles. The audience also relates her to the women in their lives they despise. Thus, gender is central to the negative interpretation of Umbridge.

### Literature Review

Scholars focus on the issue of power when they discuss Umbridge, but four scholars who solely discuss her power and make it clear she uses her power malevolently are Gregory Bassham, David Williams, Alan Kellner, and Bill McCarron. Bassham discusses Umbridge in relation to her ability to provide a good education to Hogwarts students, and he argues her desire for power prevents her from being an effective teacher. Ironically, being an ineffective teacher also prevents her from gaining the power she desires. Williams and Kellner also analyze Umbridge's desire for power in their essay "Dumbledore, Plato, and the Lust for Power," and they express their surprise that she works for the Ministry instead of Voldemort because of her "relentless onslaught of rules, vicious detention measure, and Gestapo-like tactics for gaining and maintaining control" (196). Umbridge does whatever she can to increase and preserve power. McCarron examines power versus authority in *Harry Potter* and explains that Umbridge imposes her power on others instead of practicing authority that "generates a shared power" (6), and Umbridge's unwillingness to share power is one reason why she is horrible.

Three scholars who also emphasize Umbridge exercising power are Heather Debling, Leslee Friedman, and Anne Collins Smith. Debling also mixes in Umbridge's cruelty with her power while Friedman and Smith discuss Umbridge's gender to a limited extent. Debling makes it clear Umbridge abuses her power through her cruelty. Friedman focuses on Umbridge's power as she explains Umbridge tries to exercise power through

words, which proves ineffective. However, Friedman implicitly analyzes Umbridge's gender because she compares Umbridge and Hermione. Smith is the only scholar who discusses Umbridge's gender explicitly, but she still does so in relation to power. In her essay titled "Harry Potter, Radical Feminism, and the Power of Love," Smith explains, "Umbridge, who, despite her stereotypically feminine taste in clothing and office decoration, demonstrates an ongoing obsession with traditionally masculine values such as control, hierarchy, and structure in her takeover of Hogwarts in *Order of the Phoenix*" (86). Although Smith argues Umbridge seems to be upholding gender stereotypes, which is different from the rest of the scholars, Smith still refers to Umbridge's desire for power, which aligns with other scholarship about Umbridge.

Despite *Harry Potter* scholarship paying minimal attention to Umbridge's gender, this is not the case for *Harry Potter* scholarship in general, which loves discussing gender in relation to Hermione or a motherly figure such as Molly Weasley or Professor McGonagall. For example, there is an entire essay collection dedicated to Hermione as a female hero called *Hermione Granger Saves the World: Essays on the Feminist Heroine of Hogwarts*, edited by Christopher E. Bell. In her essay, Atje Gercama "'I'm Hoping to Do Some Good in the World': Hermione Granger and Feminist Ethics," explains that Hermione is a feminist because she upholds feminist ethics. The two forms of feminist ethics Hermione upholds are ethics of care and status-oriented approaches to feminist ethics. Ethics of care is an aspect of feminist ethics that focuses on care instead of justice whereas status-oriented feminist ethics focuses on "issues of power, and how inequality and oppression can impact ethics" (43). An essay by Sarah Margaret Kniesler called, "Alohomora!: Unlocking Hermione's Feminism," also argues Hermione is a feminist

character. Kniesler supports her argument by exploring feminist children's literature, feminist characters, and three of Hermione's defining feminist characteristics: "her agency, her androgyny, and her relationships with males as she makes them more aware of the continued need for equality" (89). While these are all interesting essays about gender in *Harry Potter*, discussions about Hermione eclipse discussions on other female characters and none of the scholars focus on Umbridge's gender even though Umbridge is a rich subject of study.

### Methodology

Scholarly discussions about Umbridge and gender are clearly lacking in *Harry Potter* scholarship. However, for the audience, gender is central, and my study fills this gap by focusing on audience responses to Umbridge. My study uses quantitative and qualitative methods to compare Umbridge's characteristics across the *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix (OotP)* books and films and the *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows (DH)* books and films to internet comments made by audience members. Comparing Umbridge's characteristics to internet comments about her demonstrates scholars focus on how Umbridge is portrayed in the books and films, but the audience focuses on their reactions to Umbridge, which demonstrates the significance of some of Umbridge's characteristics. Audiences agree with scholars that Umbridge is cruel and power-hungry, but my study indicates audiences focus on the way Umbridge manipulates gender roles through her cruelty and how relatable she is, which neither the *Harry Potter* fifth and seventh books, *Harry Potter* fifth and seventh films, or scholars have discussed. Notheos on Reddit exemplifies audience responses to Umbridge and explains Umbridge

“was sly and conniving and dressed herself up as a good guy while being a psychotic bitch.” Based on this response and others like it, the audience’s responses to Umbridge suggest that her gender is first and foremost in their minds. In order to appreciate the complexities of Umbridge’s character and the audience’s response to her, scholarship should thoroughly examine Umbridge’s gender in relation to her cruelty and relatability.

Although literary critics focus on the texts, an analysis of Umbridge’s characteristics in the *Harry Potter* books and films combined with audience reactions from internet forums reveals the meaning created by the “transaction” between the text and the audience, and the meaning is richer than simply looking at the books and films on their own. In order to understand why Umbridge is hated, I use Louise Rosenblatt’s Transactional Method to understand reader (or in this instance, audience) responses to Umbridge. Rosenblatt explains reading is a transaction between a text and an individual, but the transactions vary because the reader brings a specific background to the text. As Rosenblatt explains, “the reader has only the black marks on the page as the means of arriving at a meaning—and that meaning can be constructed only by drawing on the reader’s own personal linguistic and life experiences” (1369). Although the audience has more than black marks on a page to look at in regards to Umbridge because of the screen adaptations of the series, the audience still draws on their own personal experiences to interpret Umbridge. *Harry Potter* scholarship has ignored the transaction between the audience and the text. The closest article that looks at transaction in *Harry Potter* scholarship is an article by Ranjana Das that looks at how children perceive close relationships in *Harry Potter* and then draw parallels between those relationships and their own; however, the article does not use the children’s responses to analyze the text.

Recognizing Umbridge's characteristics in the texts is vital to understanding how the audience reacts to those characteristics. I tracked and coded her characteristics in the texts she appears in, which include the *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* book and film and the *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* book and film. I chose characteristics by looking at the seven deadly sins (because in the series Rowling draws on medieval English literature, which is largely Christian in nature), the opposites of virtues such as honesty because the books follow a heroic journey with Harry possessing many virtues, and other characteristics commonly found in fantasy antagonists such as determination and planning. The other characteristics I had determined in a previous study in English 3470, a class taught by Dr. Joyce Kinkead at Utah State University called "Approaches to Research in English Studies," involving evil women in fantasy literature. The characteristics tracked include "powerful," "authoritative," "deceptive," and "manipulating and persuasive." A full list with each of the characteristics and their definitions is in Appendix A. Some adjustments were made when analyzing the films such as adding the way Umbridge smiles, which is difficult to track in the books unless specifically referred to. After creating the list of characteristics, I then created a spreadsheet with all the characteristics I used for tallying during the review of each book and film. For the books, I tracked Umbridge's actions and color-coded them according to the characteristics. For the films, I tallied her actions using the characteristics. I coded the books before the films because I could color-code the books and get a better understanding of Umbridge from them before coding the films. It is important to note some actions qualified under more than one characteristic so they were counted multiple



times. For example, in *OotP*, Umbridge talks to her new fifth year Defense Against the Dark Arts class and says,

“I do not wish to criticize the way things have been run in this school,” she said, an unconvincing smile stretching her wide mouth, “but you have been exposed to some very irresponsible wizards in this class, very irresponsible indeed—not to mention,” she gave a nasty little laugh, “extremely dangerous half-breeds.” (243)

In this instance, Umbridge shows she is manipulative and persuasive, deceptive, and racist. The entire section demonstrates she is manipulative and persuasive because she is trying to influence the way the students think about her class and the school, her “unconvincing smile” exemplifies her deception, and her reference to “extremely dangerous half-breed” demonstrates her racism because she is referring to Remus Lupin who is a werewolf. After I coded each of the characteristics, I tallied them and placed them in separate spreadsheets for the individual books and films and then placed in a larger spreadsheet combining the books and films. Charts and graphs with the results of coding the books and films are in Appendix B. I learned how to code like this in English 3470.

My method for tracking and coding audience reactions to Umbridge was more complex, but much of the groundwork was done when tracking and coding the books and films. In order to understand how the audience reacts to Umbridge, I looked at six websites and social media platforms where people commented on Umbridge and explained why they hate her. I chose the websites based on people’s ability to comment and react to other people, and the sites included are DailyMail.com, Reddit, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and 9GAG. DailyMail.com is the website version of the British

tabloid *Daily Mail*. Reddit is a discussion based social media forum. Twitter is another social media site where people can post “tweets” that are limited to 280 characters. YouTube is a video-sharing website where people can comment on posted videos. Instagram is a social media service where people can post photos and videos with captions, and then followers can comment and love the posts. 9GAG is a Hong Kong-based social media website that allows users to upload content and comment on the content. One site I decided to leave out is Facebook because it was difficult to find people’s comments about Umbridge on that platform. I picked an arbitrary day (June 25, 2018) while working on my thesis proposal and looked at comments made about Umbridge on and before that day. Some of the sites went as far as nine years back.

While looking at all the websites, I sifted through the comments to narrow down to a core group of comments I coded and tallied. To get to the core group of comments, I focused on comments where people specifically stated why they hated Umbridge or pointed out aspects of her character even though they may not have specifically said the characteristic is why they detested Umbridge. I did not include comments that simply stated, “I hate Umbridge,” or comments that were not about Umbridge but were about other people/characters. I ended up with 259 comments that I then coded and tallied. When I coded and tallied the characteristics, I used the same characteristics I used to track and code the books and films, but I had to add and adapt the terms throughout the tracking and coding process based on what people were saying. The terms added when tracking audience reactions were “relatable,” “gender,” “proud,” “kittens,” “selfish,” “greater good,” “voice,” “ignorant,” “irrational,” “annoying,” “unmotherly,” “narrow-minded,” “callous,” “in denial,” and “unfair.” A full list with each of the characteristics

and their definitions is in Appendix C. Here are two examples of how I coded an audience member's comment. iaconic on 9GAG, in response to a comment about why Umbridge is awful, states "It really wasn't any of that which made me hate her so much. It was the fact that she was a complete BITCH in every possible iteration of the word." This comment was coded under "gender" because it explicitly refers to Umbridge as a bitch, which is a reference to her gender. chocolatepop on Reddit explains they<sup>2</sup> think Umbridge is horrible "because we've all known someone who's at least a little like Umbridge." In this instance, the audience member hates Umbridge because she is relatable meaning they can relate her to people they have interacted with.

The results of the coding are telling. After coding each of the comments, they were then tallied and placed in separate spreadsheets for the individual pages and then placed in a larger spreadsheet combining the pages. The following is a chart showing the results of all the audience comments.

---

<sup>2</sup> When referring to social media posts, I have chosen to use they/them pronouns as a gender-neutral term.

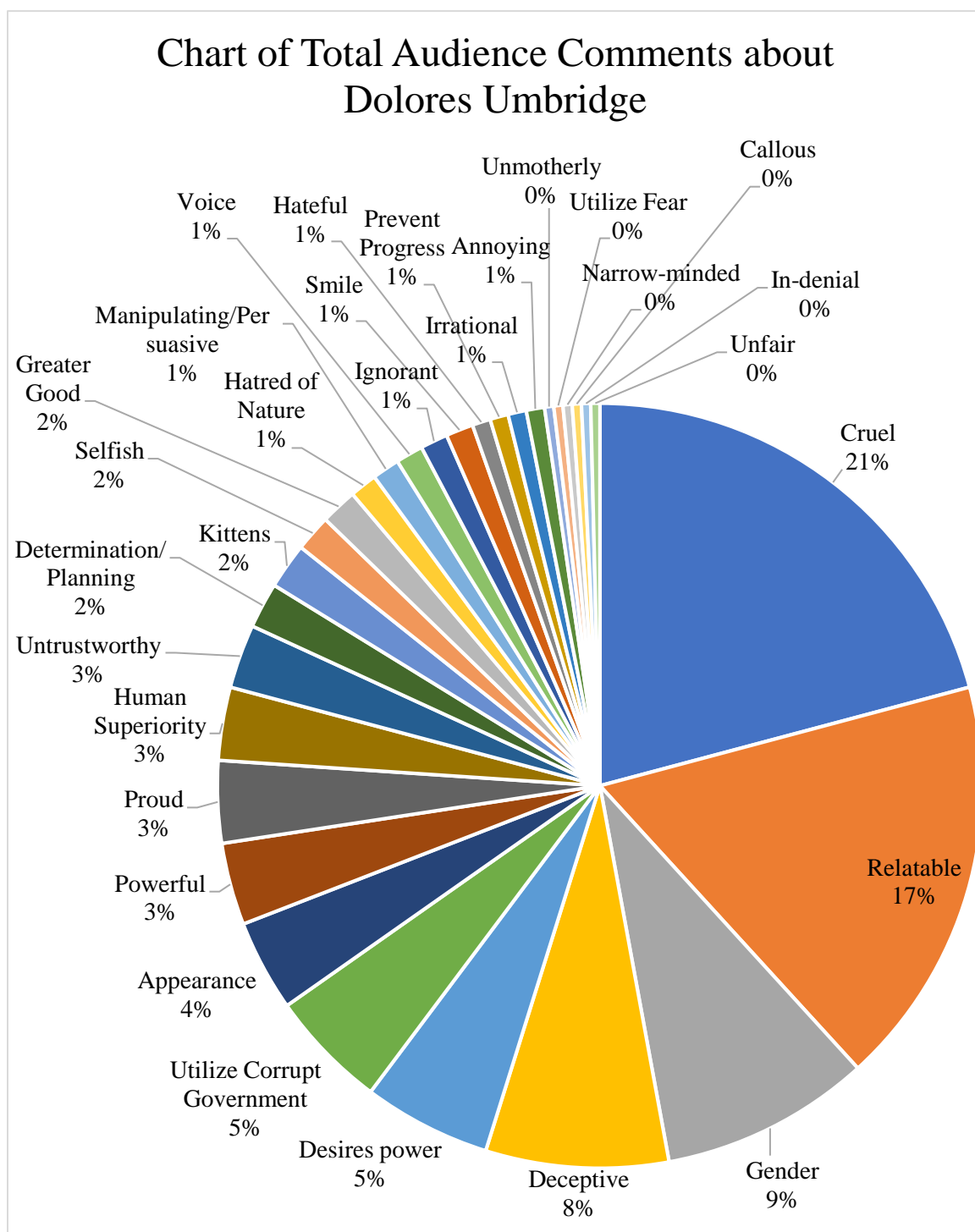


Figure 1

\*Percentage out of 259 comments coded using 31 characteristics. The comments were taken from six different internet sites chosen because of audience members' abilities to comment and interact with one another.

This chart illustrates the reasons why people hate Umbridge and the most cited reasons are because of her cruelty, relatability, and gender. I argue in the following section, however, that gender underlies almost all the comments.

### “She’s an evil, twisted, mad, old—”: Examining Umbridge’s Gender

Although cruelty appears to be the main reason why people hate Umbridge, her gender is foremost and underlies many of the comments. Several comments implicitly refer to Umbridge’s gender by referring to her as “she” or “her,” which is difficult to track in a quantitative analysis. However, in total, there were twenty-three comments overtly referring to Umbridge’s gender using words such as “bitch,” “feminist,” “hoe,” “woman,” and “witch.” Looking at direct comments about Umbridge’s gender is vital, but there are also several more comments about Umbridge’s cruelty, manipulation of gender roles, and relatability that are more significant because she is a woman. For example, nsbruno13 on Instagram explains, “the worst thing Umbridge said was ‘you know I hate children’ or something like that because if Umbridge hates children why would she be at Hogwarts??.” While this comment is explicitly talking about Umbridge’s hatred of children, the implication is that Umbridge, as a woman and a teacher, should love children and enjoy working with them, but she doesn’t, which goes against traditional gender roles. What is ironic is that the requirement to love children is not necessary for the male teachers at Hogwarts. For example, Snape does not love all the children at Hogwarts, but it is still acceptable for him to teach. This one example illustrates how Umbridge’s gender subtly influences many of the audience members. Umbridge’s gender, however, is overlooked in the books, and scholarship tends to gloss

over Umbridge's gender as well because it mainly focuses on Hermione's gender.

However, the audience actively refers to Umbridge's gender with the hashtag #umbitch.

Umbridge's gender is important to the audience because they see her as an evil woman and not just as an evil person.

One of the most common terms used to describe Umbridge is "bitch" because, as a woman with power and authority, she does not fit positive gender stereotypes and upholds negative stereotypes. Elizabeth E. Heilman, editor of *Harry Potter's World: Multidisciplinary Critical Perspectives*, says the *Harry Potter* books "feature females in secondary positions of power and authority and replicate some of the most demeaning, yet familiar, cultural stereotypes for both males and females" (222). Although Umbridge is in a secondary position of power, she does not fit the submissive female cultural stereotype Heilman refers to. When discussing the submissive female stereotype, Heilman quotes Mark A. Barnett, author of "Sex Bias in the Helping Behavior Presented in Children's Picture Books," who found "females in children's storybooks to be comforting, consoling, and providing emotional support, whereas the males were more likely to be represented obtaining a goal or overcoming an obstacle (225). Barnett's description of females does not fit Umbridge at all. Umbridge clearly has goals and objectives, and she does not provide any sort of emotional support. casey5000 on 9GAG explains that "we hate her because she's cold, condescending, and uses her authority/power to demoralize and torture you.. basically a bitch." casey5000's comment about Umbridge demoralizing and torturing is valid, but it is the tie to her gender that makes it fascinating. Women in society are typically supposed to be loving a supportive, and Umbridge is the opposite, which is what makes her a bitch. [deleted] also explains,

“Umbridge is the sort of villain you would actually be afraid of running into, the asshole corporate bitch who chooses to bully you just for the heck of it.” [deleted] draws on the stereotype of working women being awful to describe Umbridge. Because Umbridge is a *woman* with power and authority, she is called a bitch.

Umbridge, as a woman has more power and authority than is typical within the series, which upholds the audience’s view of Umbridge being a bitch. In her essay about representations of gender identity and power in *Harry Potter*, Heilman says “[f]emale archetypes tend to describe types of powerlessness, whereas dominant male archetypes tend to describe types of powerfulness,” which fits the *Harry Potter* series well (230). However, Umbridge uses a great deal of power, which is why so many people loathe her. An example of Umbridge’s power is her position as High Inquisitor. A statement written in the *Daily Prophet* explains that Umbridge, as the High Inquisitor, has the power to provide “the Minister with on-the-ground feedback about what’s really happening at Hogwarts” (307). That high level of power makes it so people have to be careful about what they do around Umbridge. With the power Umbridge has, she inflicts her own order and rules upon Hogwarts and becomes increasingly more authoritative. Throughout the course of the book, she inspects the teachers, fires Trelawney and Hagrid, and submits students to questioning. She also becomes the Hogwarts headmistress when Dumbledore leaves. There is no other woman in the series who wields as much power.

One of the most unexpected names the audience calls Umbridge is “feminist,” and they don’t mean it as a compliment. To those who called Umbridge a feminist, a feminist is a woman who is an aggressive, independent woman who is willing to do whatever she needs to succeed, and some audience members go of a feminist as a woman in power who

wants to push her agenda. For example, one audience member, spidermin, explains Umbridge is a “super feminist that is a completeb a\*\* hole.” According to this comment, spidermin thinks feminists are mean women, and, if that is their interpretation of a feminist, then yes, Umbridge is a feminist. Ja Na also says Umbridge “represents a liberal feminist who wants to push her anti-gun law on everyone.” Based on the context of the quote, Ja Na believes being a feminist is a bad thing because they *push* anti-gun laws instead of *advocate* for anti-gun laws or even attack gun laws at all. Ja Na tries to explain their comment later in the thread and equates Umbridge banning spells to passing anti-gun laws, but they never explain why Umbridge is a liberal feminist. Ja Na’s comments about Umbridge are examples of someone projecting their own ideas on Umbridge and turning her into a scapegoat for what they dislike in women.

Some audience members think Umbridge is a feminist, but using feminist theories to analyze *Harry Potter* reveals Umbridge is not a feminist in the scholarly sense although she does seem to have many of the attributes. Sarah Margaret Kniesler, in her essay "Alohomora!: Unlocking Hermione's Feminism," lists some of the attributes of feminist such as “having the access and freedom to learn who you are as well as the ability to develop and protect that identity,” which is true for Hermione (89), but Umbridge does not quite fit. Umbridge does have the freedom to be who she is and protect that identity, but that identity is harming others. Anne Collins Smith also uses feminism to analyze *Harry Potter*, and she explains two types of feminism. Liberal feminism tends to “downplay roles and traits traditionally associated with women,” which does not apply to Umbridge at all (84). Umbridge uses traits associated with women—such as her “horrible pink Alice band that matched the fluffy pink cardigan she



wore over her robes” (*OotP* 203)—as an off-putting tool of deceit so she can manipulate the people around her. She fully buys into the traits women stereotypically possess.

However, Smith also explains that in radical feminism, a person’s physical sexual identity should not determine their “personality, permissible social roles, and acceptable economic occupations” (84). Umbridge does seem to align with some aspects of radical feminist thought because she doesn’t think her gender should determine her economic occupations or her personality. However, she plays coy and uses her femininity and gender to get what she wants.

Although Umbridge seems to fit elements of feminism such as radical feminism, the books and films advocate for a particular kind of feminism—one that cares for others—in its other female characters, including Hermione, Molly Weasley, and Ginny Weasley. The major feminist ideal Umbridge goes against is the feminist ethics of care, and Umbridge’s dismissal of ethics of care is what prevents her from being a feminist. Atje Gercama explains there are three distinct characteristics of ethics of care. The characteristics are paying attention to context, the “primacy of relationships,” and “actual *caring* for people is a key element of an ethics of care” (41). Looking at these three characteristics, it is clear Umbridge does not fit ethics of care. Umbridge does not pay attention to the context of things around her because she is so focused on what she wants. Relationships are not important to her unless she can gain something from them. Umbridge also does not care for people as shown by her cruelty. Gercama also explains that another goal of “feminist ethics is to fight oppression” in general, which is something Umbridge definitely does not do (43). Umbridge upholds oppression as illustrated in her treatment of centaurs, Hagrid, and even Trelawney. Although Umbridge appears to

uphold the popular idea of feminism because she is a woman who wants power, her lack of feminist ethics of care illustrates she is not a feminist according to the scholarly view of feminism even though audience members think she is. Umbridge exemplifies the disconnect between how scholars view feminism and how audience members view feminism, and that deserves exploration.

### “*I must not tell lies*”: Examining Umbridge’s Cruelty

Although cruelty is only Umbridge’s fifth highest characteristic in the books and films at 7% (see Figure 7 in Appendix B), it is the most common attribute people mentioned in the comments at 21%. Cruelty is the most highly mentioned characteristic because people focus on the intensity of Umbridge’s cruelty versus its prevalence. The audience also focuses on Umbridge’s cruelty because she breaks female gender stereotypes by being cruel. Amani El-Alayli, Ashley A. Hansen-Brown, and Michelle Ceynar, in their article “Dancing Backwards in High Heels: Female Professors Experience More Work Demands and Special Favor Requests, Particularly from Academically Entitled Students,” discuss some of the ways female professors are perceived by students because of their gender, and this study can be used to analyze Umbridge. In the article, El-Alayli, Hansen-Brown, and Ceynar explain that women “tend to be perceived as warmer and more nurturing (e.g., kind, helpful, sensitive, and sympathetic), whereas men tend to be perceived as more competent and agentic (e.g., confident, ambitious, independent, and assertive)” (136-37). Using these stereotypes to analyze Umbridge shows she does not fit the good female stereotype and instead subverts the female stereotype by cruelly enacting the male stereotype. Umbridge’s cruelty is

evidence that she breaks female stereotypes by being a woman who is ambitious, independent, and assertive when, according to the stereotypes, she is supposed to be nurturing, sensitive, and sympathetic.

Several people on different internet forums state they detest Umbridge's use of her torture quill, and their comments indicate that one reason why they hate her quill is that it shows she is not the stereotypically nurturing woman. The quill is an instrument of torture Umbridge developed that uses the writer's blood as ink. In *OotP*, Harry receives two weeks' worth of detentions where Umbridge forces Harry to use her torture quill. When Harry begins his first detention with Umbridge, she uses her simpering voice and insists Harry use her special quill to write lines that say "I must not tell lies" until the message can "sink in" (266). For Umbridge, "sink in" means she is not satisfied until the message on the back of Harry's hand "remained scratched there, oozing droplets of blood" (270). Writing lines is not a horrible punishment, but forcing someone to carve the lines into the back of their own hand is. One of the forums discussing Umbridge's use of the quill on Harry is an Instagram post by Cherry Wallis where people were asked, "What was the worst thing you think Umbridge did or said?" punkrocker19 replied: "The worst I'd agree was exist but in her life probably the form of punishment she did to Harry by making him hurt himself and how she made it say I must not tell lies when she knew dang well it wasn't a lie." As punkrocker19 points out, Umbridge tricks and forces Harry into harming himself during detention for telling the truth Umbridge is trying to hide, which shows she is ambitious and assertive instead of nurturing. In fact, in one of Harry's detentions, Harry is not allowed to stop writing until the parchment is "shining with drops of blood from the back of his hand, which was searing with pain," which illustrates

Umbridge's malicious nature (274). In response to Umbridge's cruelty, DomLite, on Reddit, explains Umbridge is "calm as she orders Harry to basically carve lines into his own skin whilst she sits there sipping tea and staring at her pictures of kittens." One of Umbridge's most horrifying characteristics is that she seems to be stereotypically feminine with her tea and her kittens, but she is not because she is completely content while torturing Harry. It does not bother her that she is forcing another human being to experience pain which is not characteristic of a nurturing woman.

One instance of Umbridge's cruelty does not show a pattern of cruelty, but Harry is not the only student Umbridge tortures, which shows Umbridge completely lacks sensitivity. In the film adaptation of *OotP*, Umbridge forces the members of Dumbledore's Army (the D.A.) to use her special quill to write lines as punishment for being part of the D.A. In that scene, audience members see a large group of students using the quill while grimacing in pain. Umbridge sits at the front of the room with a look of complete contentment on her face. She relishes in the moment and enjoys watching the students suffer. As if this was not bad enough, the film goes one step further and makes Umbridge's cruelty personal again by showing Fred and George comforting a crying young boy Umbridge forced to use the quill. erica32paulk explains this instance was horrible because "Harry was older and could take it but that was just a tender hearted boy. It broke my heart." Cruelty towards young children further pulls at the heartstrings of the audience and makes them feel bad for the child, which in turn makes them hate Umbridge because she lacks sensitivity.

As Umbridge gains more power throughout the book and film, she demonstrates her ambition and assertiveness—stereotypically masculine traits—because her

punishments become crueler. David Lay Williams and Alan J. Kellner, in their essay “Dumbledore, Plato, and the Lust for Power,” explain Umbridge’s “cruelty seems only to increase, relative to the amount of power she is given” (236). An excellent example of her becoming crueler is when Harry is caught trying to converse with Sirius through the fireplace, and Harry refuses to tell Umbridge who he was trying to contact. Because Harry refuses to submit to Umbridge’s will, Umbridge decides the “Cruciatus Curse ought to loosen” his tongue and is determined to use it even though it is illegal (746). The Cruciatus Curse is one of the unforgivable curses, and it causes excruciating pain to the victim and can drive them to madness. That’s much more intense than forcing someone to carve a message into their own hand, and Umbridge knows it, but she does not care the curse is illegal or that it causes horrific pain because she is intent on getting what she wants. She so desperately wants answers to her questions that she reasons that what “Cornelius [the Minister of Magic] doesn’t know won’t hurt him” (746). In the fifth film, she places the picture she has of Fudge face down so the picture cannot witness what she is about to do. As Mrlowe98 points out on Reddit, Umbridge “was moments away from casting the cruxtacious curse on Harry, literally the worst pain a person can possibly be in. I’d be surprised if she only mildly tortured other students.” Umbridge’s torture is horrific, and the only reason Umbridge did not use the Cruciatus Curse on Harry was that Hermione pretended to be willing to give Umbridge the information she needed. Umbridge was so ambitious that she was fully willing to use the curse if she had to, and as she gains more power, she actively seeks even more instead of passively waiting for more power to come to her.

Umbridge's lack of stereotypical female nurturing and sympathy, as shown by her cruelty, causes psychological as well as physical scars. In *DH*, Harry, Ron, and Hermione find out Umbridge has one of the horcruxes, and when they do, Harry's "scars on the back of his right hand seemed to be tingling again" (222). The scars on the back of Harry's hand have healed long before this moment, but the tingling sensation reveals he has not forgotten Umbridge's cruelty. His scars serve as a constant reminder of what she did to him. In an article about Umbridge's background on *Pottermore*, Rowling explains Umbridge "is the only person, other than Lord Voldemort, to leave a permanent physical scar on Harry." Rowling comparing Umbridge to Voldemort is incredibly impactful because Voldemort is the main antagonist in the whole series, and he wants to take over the world. Placing Umbridge among his ranks illustrates how cruel she actually is and the long-term effects of her cruelty. krinayl on 9GAG puts it well by explaining "the scenes where the students use those magic, scar-inducing ink quills sends shivers down my spine because it's mental and physical torture." All the students Umbridge forced to use the quills will forever remember her because she made them harm themselves, and the fact that audience members still remember Umbridge's torture quill is proof of her lasting impact.

Notably, Umbridge also uses psychological cruelty and demonstrates her insensitivity by accusing people of lying when they are telling the truth. Two people Umbridge accuses of lying are Harry in *OotP* and Mrs. Cattermole in *DH*. In *OotP*, Umbridge explains students will not be using defensive spells in her class because there is nothing out in the real world that would harm them. Harry biting retorts Voldemort is out there to which Umbridge responds, "you have been informed that a certain Dark

wizard is at large once again. *This is a lie*" (245). After months of reliving the trauma he experienced during his encounter with Lord Voldemort through horrendous dreams and isolation, Umbridge makes Harry relive the trauma when she tells him the horrific things he experienced in the graveyard at the end of the fourth novel are lies. Harry is accused of making up the story even though it is clearly true. satmtcak on YouTube expresses frustration about Umbridge accusing Harry of lying by saying, "but it wasn't a lie she only believes it is cuz she's a blind bitch." Once again, the audience recognizes Umbridge is insensitive, cruel, and a woman. Umbridge tries to psychologically harm Harry by telling him what he made everything up in order for her to maintain control. Umbridge has a pattern of telling others they are lying so she can maintain control. In the seventh book, Umbridge is the head of the Muggle-born Registration Commission, which interrogates muggle-borns about their blood status. One of the people she interrogates is Mrs. Cattermole who is a witch whose parents were muggles, and in Voldemort's new regime, being muggle-born is impossible because there is no way a muggle-born could use magic. In Mrs. Cattermole's trial, Umbridge interrogates Mrs. Cattermole about her blood status and asks her from which witch or wizard she took a wand. Mrs. Cattermole explains she did not take the wand and that it chose her, which implies Mrs. Cattermole is a witch and not an imposter. Umbridge insensitively laughs at Mrs. Cattermole and says, "no, I don't think so, Mrs. Cattermole. Wands only choose witches or wizards. You are not a witch" (261). Once again, Umbridge accuses someone of lying even though she knows the person is telling the truth. Mrs. Cattermole's identity is questioned by Umbridge, which is extremely insensitive and cruel.

Umbridge demonstrates her ambition cruelly by selfishly inducing fear in those she has power over through her punishments, rules, and authority to help her maintain power, which is not something a giving, nurturing woman would do. When I tracked and coded Umbridge's characteristics in *OotP*, I found twenty-seven instances when Umbridge used fear to control others. One example of the fear she induces is when she uses her power to harm Professor Trelawney. Umbridge fires Trelawney and is about to force her to leave Hogwarts. Trelawney is "terrified" at the thought of leaving Hogwarts (594), and she tries to tell Umbridge she cannot leave Hogwarts by explaining, "I've been here sixteen years! H-Hogwarts is m-my h-home!" (595). Instead of giving Trelawney words of comfort, Umbridge relishes in the opportunity she has to exact her power on someone and force them to do something unpleasant. Umbridge's desire for control proves she doesn't "care for anyone else but herself," which is one reason why she is so hated by the audience (malaika\_bustani). Zaki2005 on YouTube, in response to this scene, simply says, "I feel so bad for Trelawney." This instance with Umbridge and Trelawney illustrates that Umbridge does not care for other people and only wants to control them so she can fulfill her own will.

An even more troubling way Umbridge breaks the positive female stereotypes—being nurturing, sensitive, and sympathetic—is through her racism which is shown in her outright hatred for anyone half-human and belief in human superiority. Oklahom0 on Reddit explains "Umbridge is like the homophobic teacher to a gay kid, or the racist friend's father who tells you that you guys can't hang out anymore because your Mexican." Umbridge firmly believes in human superiority. Although the audience did not highly focus on Umbridge's racism, her racism shows she does not care for others. When



Harry, Ron, and Hermione have their first Defense Against the Dark Arts class with Umbridge, she insults Lupin by calling him one of those “extremely dangerous half-breeds” and disregards that he is a great wizard by focusing on the fact that he is a werewolf (243). Umbridge even passed legislation to make it difficult for werewolves to get jobs because she detests them so much. Umbridge’s hatred for anyone different from she is continues in the forbidden forest when she says the centaurs have “near-human intelligence,” which the centaurs consider a great insult (754). She also insults them by saying they do not own the forest and only live there because the Ministry of Magic permits them to. She implies they cannot take care of themselves because the Ministry treats them like animals living in a fenced area where they are granted the privilege of living. ShelfLifeInc refers to Umbridge’s time among the centaurs and explains Umbridge “was just so racist that her being in the mere presence of a group of centaurs (and worse, being at their mercy) would have traumatised her” because she hates them so much. Umbridge also shows her hatred for those who are not fully human when she inspects Hagrid. Hagrid is half-giant, and when Umbridge inspects his teaching she is extremely demeaning. She claims Hagrid has to use “crude sign language,” has “poor short term memory,” and shows “pleasure at the idea of violence” (447). All these observations could get Hagrid fired, and Umbridge seems to take pleasure in portraying Hagrid as inferior because is not fully human. In all of these instances, Umbridge demonstrates a complete lack of care and racism.

These instances of Umbridge’s cruelty demonstrate she does not fit the nurturing, sensitive, and sympathetic woman model audience members have come to expect from teachers and women in general. In their study on female professors, El-Alayli, Hansen-

Brown, and Ceynar explain students expect female professors “to function like academic mothers” (137), and Umbridge definitely does not fit that role. She is not at all motherly, and because she completely rejects that role by being ambitious, independent, and assertive, the audience hates her even more than they hate Voldemort. In fact, Frank Halcomb admits, “I wanted her dead more than Voldemort.” Umbridge’s horrific torture quill, complete lack of compassion, willingness to use an illegal curse, use of psychological cruelty, insensitivity, and racism all demonstrate that Umbridge is not the stereotypical female, which upsets the audience.

As a result of her cruelty, Umbridge receives a highly gendered punishment. At the end of *OotP*, Umbridge is carried away into the woods by centaurs after she insults them. Although the book and film do not explain what happens to Umbridge when she is taken by the centaurs, some audience members speculate she was raped by them. The centaur rape is a highly debated issue among the audience, but some of the audience members think she was raped because, in “Greek mythology, that’s what centaurs do. They rape women” (wont2want). At the end of the book, Dumbledore goes “alone into the forest to rescue her from the centaurs” (848), and when they both come back, Umbridge is uncharacteristically unkempt and doesn’t say a word. buldieb uses the evidence that Umbridge came back from the forest “severely traumatized with no obvious wounds,” to imply rape. In fact, when Ron makes soft clip-clopping noises, Umbridge panics and sits “bolt upright, looking wildly around” (849). It is clear something happened in the forest to traumatize Umbridge, and it is likely it was a highly gendered punishment for her cruelty.

The audience's response to the centaur rape theory, however, is varied. Some audience members think it is highly plausible because of Greek mythology (as shown above), whereas other audience members think it highly unlikely because it does not seem to fit the *Harry Potter* world. The audience's emotional responses are also enlightening and can be summarized nicely in a conversation between DigitalMindShadow and [deleted] on Reddit. In response to a comment about the possibility of Umbridge being raped, DigitalMindShadow says, "Nobody deserves to be raped, but she was a serial child abuser who deserved to be punished harshly." To which [deleted] replies, "Well 'nobody' is such an absolute term." This conversation on Reddit demonstrates some people think the possibility of Umbridge being raped is undeserved while others would not mind if it actually happened. The varied responses to the centaur rape theory illustrate some people support and some reject this highly gendered punishment.

#### "That won't do, now, will it?": Examining Umbridge's Relatability

Umbridge's relatability is not a characteristic that can be tracked or coded in the texts, but it is clear the audience relates to Umbridge because they feel like she is someone they could meet in real-life. NoseDragon points out we "have all met an Umbridge at one point or another," which is why so many people hate her. In fact, relatability is built into Umbridge's character because, as Rowling explains in an article about Umbridge on Pottermore, Umbridge is based on one of Rowling's teachers or instructors whom she "disliked intensely on sight" without any real reason. The fact that Umbridge is based on a real person solidifies the idea Eliza T. Dresang argues in her

essay “Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender” that the magical world “is closer to reality than it is to a vision of a better world” (238). People relate the *Harry Potter* world to our own world, which makes Umbridge intimidating. Aimee on Twitter explains Umbridge “was always scarier than Voldemort because there were Umbridges all around us, climbing the ranks through proficiency and unquestioning compliance.” Umbridge is a character who shows bad people are everywhere and that anyone can meet a bad person at any time whether the person is a teacher, a government official, or some combination of the two. However, her relatability tends to be gendered and despised because she reminds people of women in their lives who did not fit positive gender stereotypes of women.

As noted previously, Umbridge, as a woman, is supposed to be nurturing, but instead, the content of her classes shows she stifles the progress of her students for her own benefit, does not understand her students, and has a clear political agenda, which are some reasons why people hate Umbridge. Even though the students in her class are fifth years and should have a good handle on Defense Against the Dark Arts, Umbridge insists they return to basic principles approved by the Ministry of Magic because their learning has been fragmented. She tries to stifle their learning by not letting them apply what they learn in class and only teaching them the magic they will find on their Defense Against the Dark Arts O.W.L. She is only concerned about the examinations and insists there is “nothing waiting out” in the “real world” that would require them to use defensive spells (244). simplystarlight explains Umbridge “doesn’t listen to the students and has [her] own agenda,” which is why people in and out of the books despise her so much. Umbridge does not allow the students to use the spells that could be so valuable to them

even though they are willing to learn as shown when the students decide to set up their own version of a Defense Against the Dark Arts class called “Dumbledore’s Army” (394). They take matters into their own hands because, despite Umbridge’s best efforts, they believe Voldemort has returned, and they want to prepare themselves “for what’s waiting out there” (325). Umbridge, however, refuses to acknowledge Voldemort is back so she tries to stifle her students’ learning to support the belief that he has not returned.

Not only is Umbridge a terrible teacher who wants more power and is unsympathetic, but audiences also relate to the way she reduces student morale in order to bolster her own status and remove the blame from herself. As Kenton Forshee explains so well, “Most of us have probably had a Dolores Umbridge or two in our scholastic past” who did not teach well and/or made you feel dreadful. One example of Umbridge demoralizing a student is when she humiliates Hermione in front of her classmates in *OotP*. Hermione questions Umbridge about her course aims and asks whether or not the point of Defense Against the Dark Arts is to “practice defensive spells” (242). Umbridge responds,

“Are you a Ministry-trained educational expert, Miss Granger?” asked Professor Umbridge in her falsely sweet voice.

“No, but—”

“Well then, I’m afraid you are not qualified to decide what the ‘whole point’ of any class is. Wizards much older and cleverer than you have devised our new program of study.” (242)

Umbridge belittles Hermione by explaining that Hermione is unqualified to determine what should be taught in the course. The reason Umbridge humiliates Hermione and gets

upset that she questions her authority is that Hermione questions her authority as a teacher. As a result, Umbridge responds in a way that enforces her own power and reduces the credibility of Hermione. People relate to others trying to bring them down, which is one reason why they hate Umbridge. For example, Druid explains, “My science teacher was the same, a thoroughly horrible woman that delighted in belittling everyone who didn't instantly understand her every utterance.” Like this woman, Umbridge is incredibly unsympathetic when people do not understand her because she is ambitious and if her students show a lack of understanding, it hinders her own progress. People like Umbridge blame others for the problems in the world and do not take responsibility for their actions.

Another reason Umbridge is relatable is that she is an ambitious government official who violates society's expectations of women by wanting power and being willing to do whatever she can to get it, and people compare her to actual female government officials such as Hillary Clinton, Betsy Devos, and Margaret Thatcher. For example, TexanBlaze 94 on YouTube says, “Umbridge is Literally the Hillary Clinton of the wizard world.” @Frickin NC on Twitter, after Devos was made Secretary of Education, says “Say hello to your new Inquisitor, er Secretary of Education #DeVos #Umbridge.” Captainbiscuit on 9GAG says, “I hate Umbridge because she's basically Thatcher.” Umbridge, as a woman in power, upsets expectations that women “are or should be lower in power, agency, or status than men” (El-Alayli et al. 137). Umbridge attempts to control the situation by refusing to recognize the truth of the events around her, and she does whatever she needs to in order to support the people in power, which people feel like happens with government officials today. Wildhalcyon explains what

“Umbridge wants however is very real. She works towards racial purity. She does this as a high level bureaucrat in the government by imprisoning and torturing dissidents. That’s not storybook. That feels frighteningly real.” In this comment, Wildhalcyon explains Umbridge feels relatable because she does whatever she can to get rid of the people who oppose her, which Wildhalcyon believes government officials do today. In *OotP*, the first mention of Umbridge is that she is the “Senior Undersecretary to the Minister,” which places her in a great position of power at the Ministry (139). The first time she speaks, she questions Dumbledore after he suggests someone may have ordered dementors to attack Harry by saying, “So silly of me. But it sounded for a teensy moment as though you were suggesting that the Ministry of Magic had ordered an attack on this boy!” (147). Not only is Umbridge questioning Dumbledore, whom the audience has grown to trust, but she also accuses Dumbledore of trying to overthrow the Ministry of Magic because he believes the Ministry could have done something wrong, and we know Fudge’s greatest fear is that Dumbledore is trying to overthrow him. Umbridge uses subtle—and sometimes not-so-subtle—ways to undermine the authority of her enemies. The irony in her statement about the Ministry of Magic ordering an attack on Harry is we later learn she is the one who ordered dementors to attack Harry because people in the Ministry were talking about discrediting Harry, but she “was the one who actually *did* something about it” (747). Umbridge is the type of government official who is willing to do whatever it takes to gain power. She typically tries to stay within the bounds of the law, but she is willing to bend rules like many corrupt government officials people relate to and despise.

Umbridge's relatability goes beyond her being a female government official or teacher people relate to. Because Umbridge is both a female teacher and a female government official, she is in a unique position and serves as a warning about too much government interference in education. Umbridge's dual roles allow people to relate to her for multiple reasons because she is like the "vindictive teacher or boss with little real power other than to make your life hell" that people have encountered in their lives (Accidental-Ouroboros). The Educational Decrees Umbridge pushes through the government are excellent examples of her combining her roles of teacher and government official, but they also demonstrate her assertiveness, which makes the audience "scrutinize [her] behavior" as some people do with female professors (El-Alayli et al. 137). As the Hogwarts High Inquisitor, Umbridge blurs the lines between education and government as she exercises her authority in a government educational position. The Educational Decrees she passes during her time as High Inquisitor show the potentially unethical combination Umbridge embodies because she can pass laws everyone needs to follow based on her own opinions because no one is in a position to check her decrees. An example of Umbridge using the decrees to bolster her own position is when she creates Educational Decree Number Twenty-six that states, "Teachers are hereby banned from giving students any information that is not strictly related to the subjects they are paid to teach" (551). Umbridge creates the decree in order to prevent teachers from telling students anything that may make the students question the competency of the Ministry of Magic. This act of censorship shows the dangers of the incompetent combination of a government official and teacher who has too much authority. Many



audience members fear corrupt government officials and teachers in their own lives, and Umbridge is just that.

Although the audience despises Umbridge because she reminds them of women who break conventional gender stereotypes by being powerful, her relatability goes beyond her gender. A common pattern throughout the web comments was that people compare Umbridge to real people such as government officials, teachers, and others they despise. What was enlightening about these comments was that the people compared Umbridge to men and women. Her relatability was not limited to her gender. She was mainly compared to women such as Hillary Clinton, Betsy Devos, and Margaret Thatcher, as mentioned previously, but she was also compared to Donald Trump. For example, during my research, I found the following meme on [politicalflavors.com](http://politicalflavors.com) that compares Clinton, Trump, and Umbridge.

## WHO WORE IT BETTER?



Figure 2. Meme comparing Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump, and Dolores Umbridge

This meme makes it clear Umbridge's relatability transcends her gender because she can be any government official.

Umbridge serves as a scapegoat for anyone the audience doesn't like. Some relate to her because she is a corrupt government official who is only in government to get power instead of helping the people. She does not necessarily care where her power comes from as long as she gets it, which is detrimental for everyone, and people liken that to government officials like the ones previously stated. Umbridge is also relatable because she is a horrible teacher, and most people have had at least one bad teacher in their lifetimes. Because Umbridge is a bad teacher, she becomes the embodiment of all bad teachers, male and female. One of the reasons why she is so horrible is because she belittles students and makes them feel terrible about themselves instead of lifting them up and inspiring them to become better. Umbridge is essentially the embodiment of all the characteristics people hate in people in positions of power. She only thinks about herself and does not care about the consequences her actions may have on other people. For some people, that means she is like anyone in a position of power who tries to keep the masses from having any type of authority.

### Conclusion

Scholars should pay more attention to responses from popular audiences when analyzing literature than they have previously. Although it is true that using Rosenblatt's Transactional Method could skew the results of my study since scholars are not typically concerned with personal relatability, Umbridge has no meaning until the audiences and text interact with one another. Audience interpretations of Umbridge are vital to this

analysis because they show how important gender, cruelty, and relatability are to Umbridge's character. A strictly text-based analysis of Umbridge would have missed the complexity of these facets of her character, as demonstrated by the seven scholarly sources that discuss Umbridge. The audience responses make an analysis of Umbridge richer because they show what is most important to the audience, which shows which of Umbridge's characteristics are most significant. As mentioned previously, cruelty was the fifth highest characteristic in the quantitative analysis of her characteristics in the books and films, and gender and relatability were not even characteristics that could have been tracked in the quantitative analysis of the books and films. However, analyzing and coding audience comments shows the significance of Umbridge's characteristics, which, in turn, reveals some of the most important and telling scenes in the books and films. It is looking at the audience comments that reveals the meaning created through the transaction between the audience members and the books and films. The books and films invite the audience's criticism of Umbridge because she is set up to reject stereotypes. From the instant the audience is introduced to Umbridge in her pink attire that contrasts her toad-like appearance, the audience immediately distrusts her, which leads to their hatred of her.

Umbridge's character is complex, but scholarship has ignored her complexity by only looking at her power. Yes, she does represent a corrupt government system and abuses power as discussed by scholarship, but even those are evidences of her cruelty, relatability, and gender. As a woman, her abuse of power is made worse because she manipulates gender roles to get what she wants. Her cruelty is also worse in the minds of the audience because women are stereotypically supposed to be nurturing, which

Umbridge is not. Her relatability is more complex than her cruelty, though, because people compare her to men as well as women. That comparison, however, shows Umbridge can be a symbol for all who abuse power, which goes beyond her power in the way scholars have discussed her.

Overall, Umbridge has been more influential on the *Harry Potter* series and the audience than scholarship gives her credit for. As @filmybabe points out on Twitter, “It’s weird how every potterheads common enemy appears only in one movie and isn’t the main villain of the series.” Umbridge is a phenomenon. Although she is not one of the main characters, Umbridge’s presence in the books and films is significant because of the hatred she inspires in the audience. According to the audience and as shown throughout this thesis, Umbridge should not be so easily dismissed by scholarship.

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Appendix A

<b>Alphabetical List of Coded Book and Film Characteristics with Definitions</b>	
<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Angry	Showing strong resentment
Appearance	Moments in the book when their appearance is described
Authoritative	Instances when the individual states a command
Cruel	Intentionally inflict physical, mental, or emotional harm
Deceptive	Intentionally causing someone to believe something that is not true
Desires power	Wanting more power than they currently have
Determination/Planning	The ability to create a plan and stick with it
Hatred of Nature	Disdain for the natural order of the world
Hateful	An intense dislike for someone or something
“Hem Hem”	The sound Umbridge makes before she is about to speak
Human Superiority	A belief that creatures that are not human are inferior
Impatient	Not remaining calm when eager to get something
Manipulating/Persuasive	Trying to get someone to do what they want
Minions	Have people who do their bidding
Power (magic)	Moments when magic is used
Powerful	Having power or authority over something
Prevent Progress	Prevent individuals from becoming better either in knowledge or status
Proud	Having a high opinion of one’s self at the expense of others
Smile	Umbridge’s self-satisfied smile
Untrustworthy	Not worthy to be trusted
Utilize Fear	Use fear as a means of control
Utilize/Represent Corrupt Government	Use the government to uphold their position or make themselves more powerful
Worried	Showing or feeling concern about something

Table 1

## Appendix B

### Umbridge's Characteristics in the *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* Book

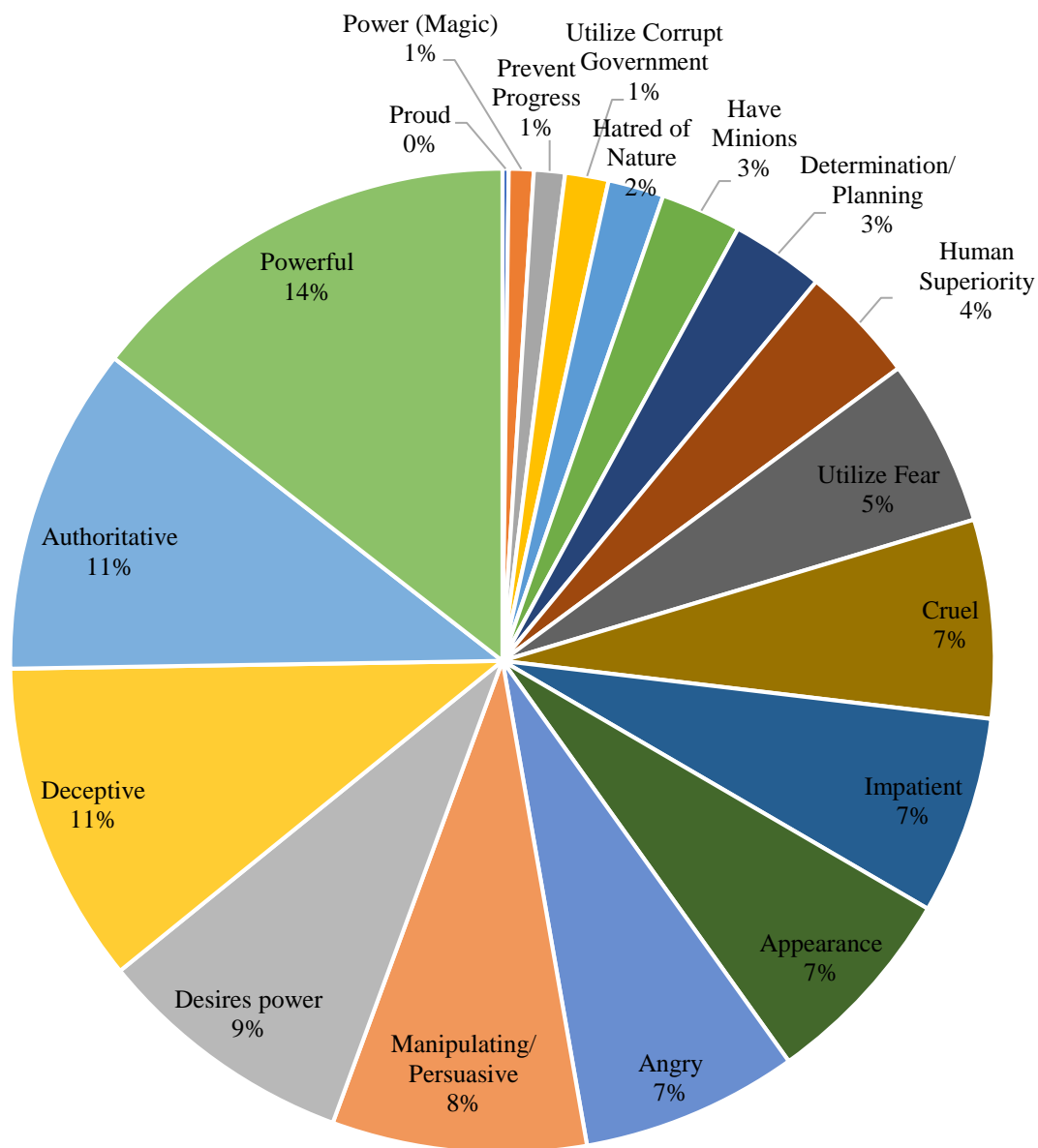


Figure 3

\*Percentage out of 491 instances of 23 characteristics

## Umbridge's Characteristics in the *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* Film

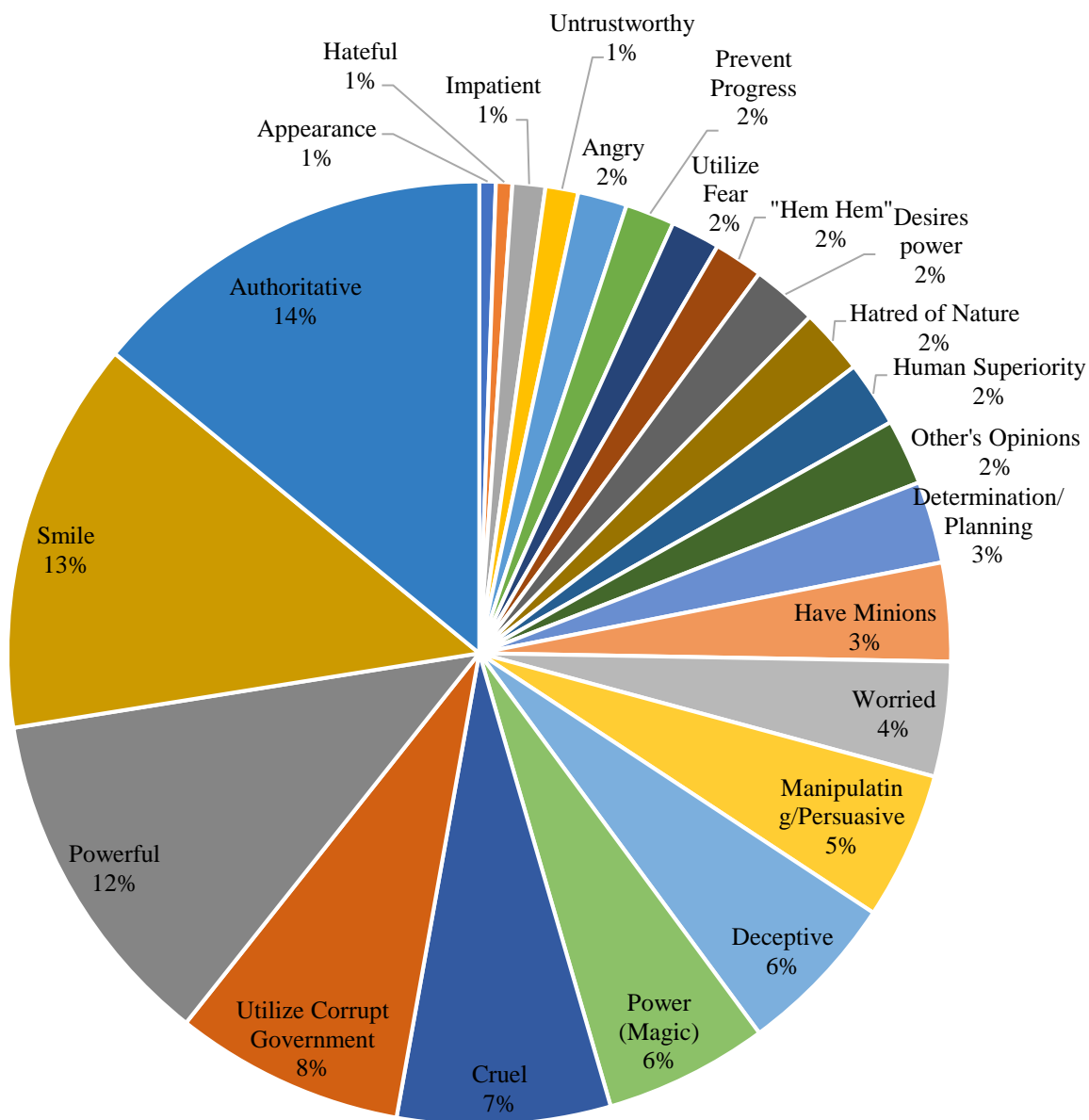


Figure 4

\*Percentage out of 178 instances of 23 characteristics



### Umbridge's Characteristics in the *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* Book

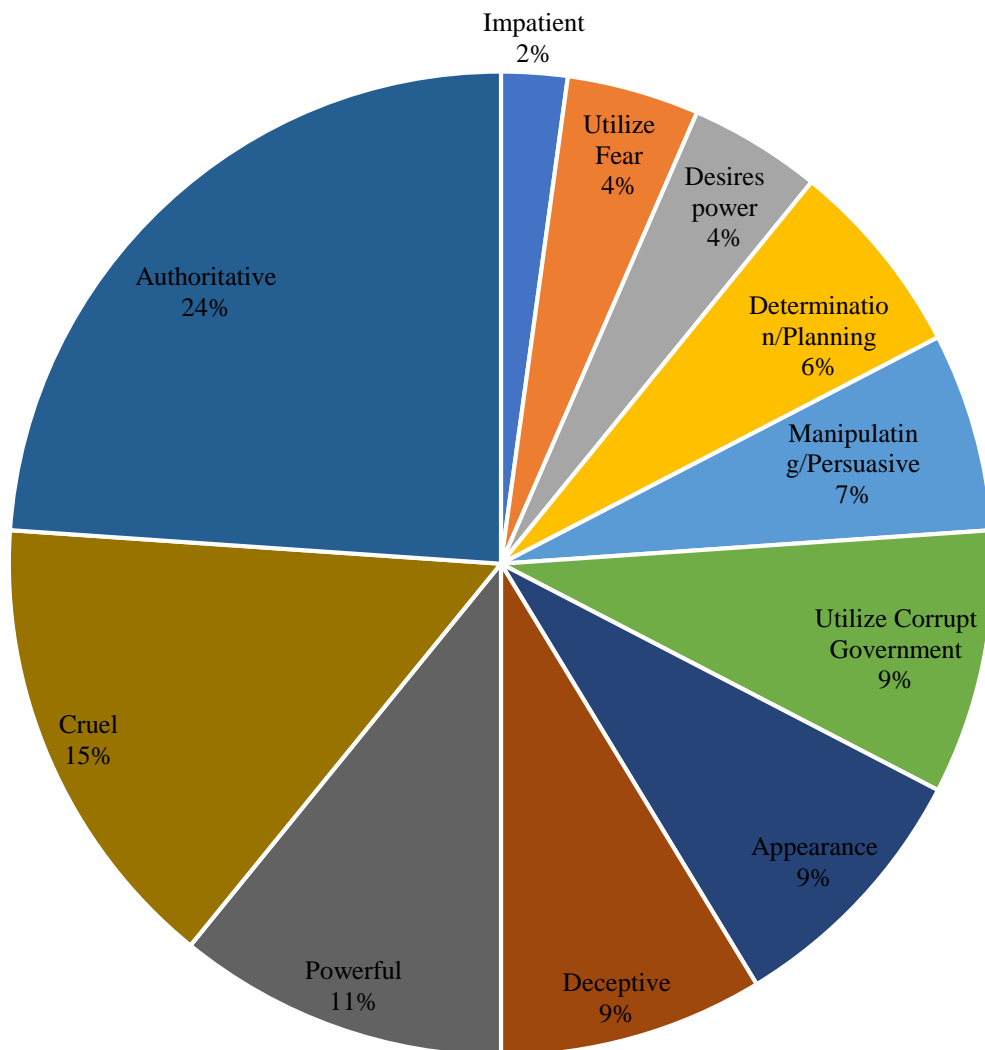


Figure 5

\*Percentage out of 46 instances of 11 characteristics

### Umbridge's Characteristics in the *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* Film

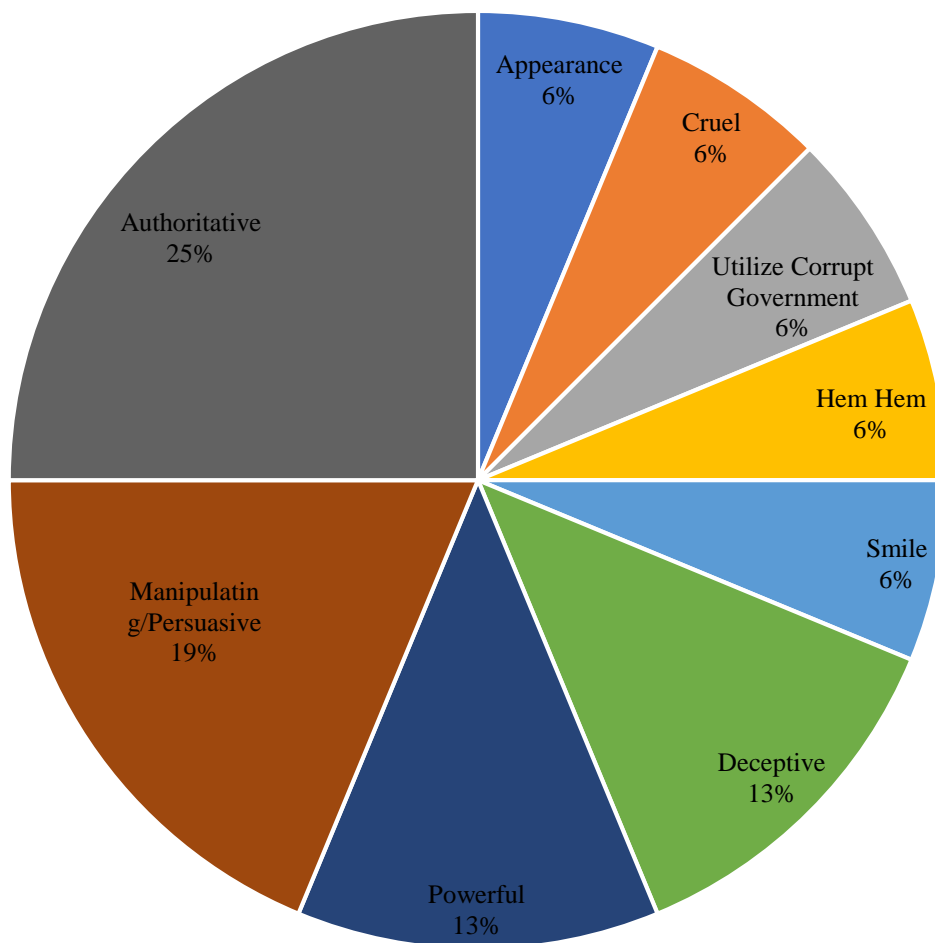


Figure 6

\*Percentage out of 16 instances of 9 characteristics

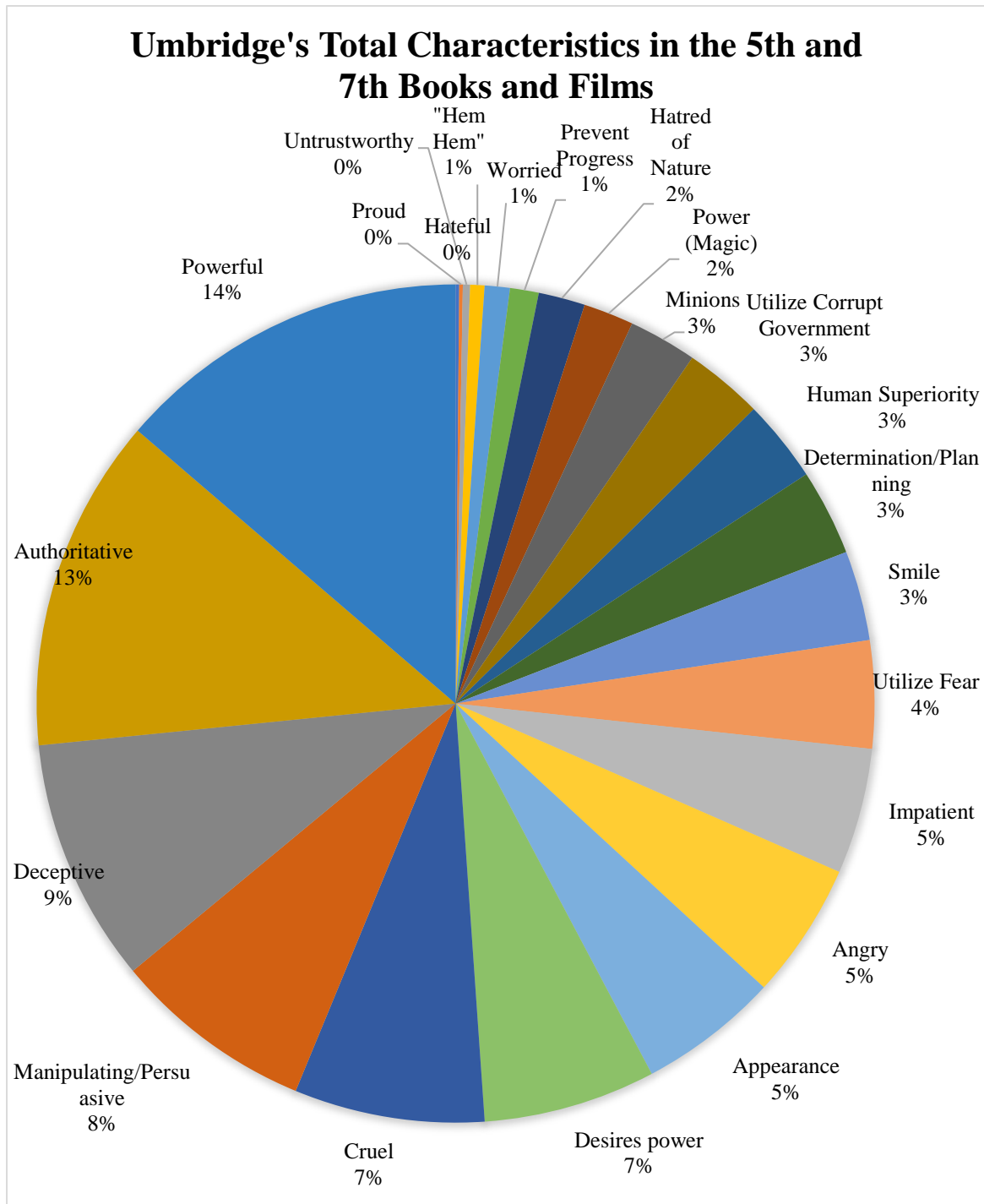


Figure 7

\*Percentage out of 722 total instances of 23 characteristics

Appendix C

<b>Alphabetical List of Coded Internet Characteristics with Definitions</b>	
Characteristic	Definitions
Annoying	Causing irritation
Appearance	When someone referenced Umbridge's appearance
Callous	Being hardened and showing no sympathy
Cruel	Intentionally inflict physical, mental, or emotional harm
Deceptive	Intentionally causing someone to believe something that is not true
Desires power	Wanting more power than they currently have
Determination/Planning	The ability to create a plan and stick with it
Gender	Referring to Umbridge's gender with terms such as "bitch," "feminist," "hoe," "woman," and "witch."
Greater Good	Believes what she is doing will benefit more people than herself
Hatred of Nature	Disdain for the natural order of the world
Hateful	An intense dislike for someone or something
Human Superiority	A belief that creatures that are not human are inferior
Ignorant	Showing a lack of knowledge
In-denial	Refusing to admit the truth or reality of something
Irrational	Not being governed by reason
Kittens	Referencing Umbridge's apparent love of kittens
Manipulating/Persuasive	Trying to get someone to do what they want
Narrow-minded	Lack of tolerance
Powerful	Having power or authority over something
Prevent Progress	Prevent individuals from becoming better either in knowledge or status
Proud	Having a high opinion of one's self at the expense of others
Relatable	Possible to understand because of similarities to one's own experiences; comparing to people in own lives
Selfish	Concerned only with oneself
Smile	Umbridge's self-satisfied smile
Unfair	Unjust and partial toward people
Unmotherly	Negatively uncharacteristic of a mother
Untrustworthy	Not worthy to be trusted
Utilize Corrupt Government	Use the government to uphold their position or make themselves more powerful
Utilize Fear	Use fear as a means of control
Voice	The sound of Umbridge's voice or when she says "hem hem"

Table 2

## Appendix D

Around International Women's Day in 2019, I was shown this meme on The Quibbler's Facebook that beautifully summarizes how people think of Umbridge compared to other women in the *Harry Potter* series.



Figure 8. Meme on The Quibbler's Facebook