ONE DIRECTION REAL PERSON FICTION ON WATTPAD.COM: 
A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF SEX AND ROMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Ashley Hedrick: One Direction Real Person Fiction on Wattpad.com: A textual analysis of sex and romance
(Under the direction of [Francesca Dillman Carpentier])

This study conducted a textual analysis of 24 of the most popular real person fiction stories published on Wattpad.com about the members of the boy band One Direction. The analysis identified several problematic themes across the stories regarding gender roles and gendered sexual scripts. Males dominated sexual interactions, initiating kissing and sexual activity and actively participating in kissing and sexual activity twice as often as females in the dataset. The language used to describe kissing and sexual activity often insinuated male aggression or attack and female surprise at males’ sudden actions. Pain and hesitance/unease for kissing and sexual activity emerged as a prevalent theme expressed by female characters in these stories. Furthermore, inconsistent conceptualizations of sexual consent, nonconsensual sexual activity, and rape/sexual assault varied across the data in a ways that reinforce sexist patriarchal dominance. Gender roles outside of romantic relationships also reinforced the ideal of patriarchal protection of females.
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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

“He what?! And you said no?” She doesn’t let me answer before she continues- but yeah I guess. ‘You know I read somewhere that in Sweden, at the point where a girl says no and the man keeps touching her it’s rape, also even though he doesn’t actually rape her...It’s the law!’ she’s talking fast, her voice loud and shrill. I pull down the sleeves of my sweater, to cover up the faint but sore finger sized bruise, that I showed her, where Zayn’s thumb had bored into my bone on each of my wrists.

I roll my eyes, trying to calm her down. I should have known she’d freak out and make such a big deal out of it. I should have never said anything. Though I’m grateful she cares so much.

‘We’re not in Sweden Tam, and it’s not helping. It wasn’t that bad,’ I don’t even remember it clearly. ‘And I’m sure he wasn’t just drunk, him and those friends were definitely on something stronger,’ I add.

The passage above is an excerpt from “He’s No Good- Zayn Malik,” a real person fiction story—a type of fanfiction written about celebrities instead of fictional characters, abbreviated as RPF—written about former One Direction band member Zayn Malik. The ninety-two chapter story, written by an author penned MalikIsSexy, has garnered over 21.9 million reads on Wattpad.com. This is a high but not exceptional figure for the self-publishing website and virtual
community; some of the most popular One Direction RPF stories published on Wattpad.com have topped 100 million reads.

The above excerpt from “He’s No Good- Zayn Malik” features protagonist Zoe Fray and her friend, Tamara, discussing the behavior of Zayn Malik at a party the night before. As Zoe and Zayn had kissed at the party, Zayn began groping her and using excessive force. In the previous chapter, Zoe’s narration indicated that she attempted to push him away three times during the aggressive make-out-session. Finally, Zoe managed to get a word in and begged Zayn to stop. In response, he stormed off into the crowd of partiers.

Zoe and Tamara’s retrospective conversation about Zayn’s actions conveys a complex conceptualization of consent. Tamara’s voice clearly expresses the severity of Zayn’s behavior; even though he didn’t “actually rape her,” his actions were wrong enough to be considered illegal in another country. However, Zoe brushes off Tamara’s concerns, excusing his actions as not “that bad” and placing the blame on Zayn’s drug-induced high instead of Zayn himself. The story has already informed readers that Zayn is a former drug dealer and still uses cocaine, although he had previously promised Zoe he would stop. Zoe eventually forgives Zayn when he apologizes for his actions at the party. Later in the story, she engages in consensual sex with Zayn, who clearly asked for permission to proceed before and throughout the liaison.

The themes regarding sex in “He’s No Good- Zayn Malik” fall somewhere in the middle of a spectrum of values about consent present in One Direction RPF on Wattpad.com. Some stories describe the band members as sexually abusive and emotionally manipulative, where the protagonist’s first sexual encounter with a band member lacks consent and constitutes rape. However, others clearly identify and condemn rape. For example, in author “jhildey”’s story, entitled “Winter Air [H.S.],” the female protagonist, Ava, directly calls out her previous
boyfriend’s behavior as rape when she retells the details of her trauma to her current boyfriend, former band member Harry Styles. jhildey writes:

He didn’t have a condom and I was in between birth control so I didn’t want to have sex. That didn’t stop him though. You would have thought it would though since he loved me and all. But nope- it didn’t. That night he raped me, but he didn’t say that it was since I was his girlfriend. I didn’t want to do it. I told him to stop but the rage and alchol [sic] mixed took away all of his senses…He came to my house the next day apologizing. I didn’t want to hear it. I broke up with him.

Similarly, while some stories portray egalitarian relationships between romantic partners, others exemplify patriarchal dominance. Again, “He’s No Good- Zayn Malik” illustrates gender roles as complicated within romantic relationships; although Zoe seems to assert her equality in the relationship by not tolerating Zayn’s jealousy of her male friends, she also repeatedly forgives Zayn for lying about his drug use and even for lying about a murder he committed during a drug-dealing scuffle. In contrast, in “Winter Air [H.S],” Ava breaks up with Harry for several months for lying, albeit about compromising his career plans to follow her during her writing internship in Los Angeles. Also, it is clear throughout the story that Harry values Ava’s intelligence and success. He expresses this sentiment in his wedding vows in the story’s epilogue, vowing to “cheer [Ava] on when [she] change[s] the world through [her] words, and to always listen to [her].”

Given the high number of reads for these stories, it seems clear that a range of ideals about romantic and sexual relationships central to One Direction RPF narratives is reaching a large audience. Although it is possible that Wattpad.com users could misrepresent their identities online, it also seems clear that the writers of and audience for One Direction RPF stories largely
consist of adolescent girls and young women in their early twenties; authors often include apologies for delayed story updates because of high school or university assignments, reader comments on the stories frequently reference personal experiences regarding grade school, romantic involvement with boys, and romantic interest in the male band members of One Direction, and many authors encourage readers to find their personal social media accounts, which usually belong to young females.

On its face, the widely-circulated valorization of rape and abusive romantic relationships among young females quickly raises questions of social import—do participants in this community learn to idolize dangerous relationships? Does Wattpad.com perpetuate female acquiescence to patriarchal dominance and violence? However, questions like these are reductionist and unfair to participants in the community. As “He’s No Good- Zayn Malik” and “Winter Air [H.S.]” demonstrate, writers and readers express nuanced understandings of sexual consent and gendered roles in sexual and romantic relationships. Therefore, this study conducts a textual analysis in order to explore the complexity of these themes in One Direction RPF stories on Wattpad.com. The results of this textual analysis certainly carry social significance; understanding how authors write about sex and romance in this context could reveal meaningful knowledge about the way that these young women—and likely millions of others in the enormous One Direction RPF community—understand and navigate sexual consent and romantic relationships in a global society still plagued by rape culture and gender inequality.

This information could also be valuable to fan studies scholarship. While fan studies literature has extensively analyzed and extolled the role of fanfiction in decreasing fans’ stigma towards LGTBQ relationships and shameful feelings about sex, it has not thoroughly examined the prevalence of rape narratives or the participation of adolescent girls in these communities.
Furthermore, while the literature documents fandoms’ transition from print to blogs and other online spaces, little research investigates how the most current fanfiction platforms, like Wattpad.com, shape fan experiences. Therefore, this research addresses these gaps in the fan studies scholarship.

This study will also contribute to the fields of media psychology and gender studies by adding data to limited body of research concerning the content and consequences of adolescents’ sexual scripts. Both fields are still developing theories of how factors at the macro, meso, and micro levels interact with each other to influence individual sexual behavior and individual experiences of gender inequality. These literatures will inform my analysis by providing a framework within which to analyze the data; the individually expressed sexual and romantic narratives recorded in the stories should be interpreted as the product of a confluence of different levels of social inputs, rather than a direct representation of individual beliefs. The following literature review synthesizes the relevant information from these disciplines.
Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Scripts

The sexual scripting theoretical model claims that people tend to interpret others’ actions and model their own behavior according to internalized scripts, which are “the cognitive models that people use to guide and evaluate social and sexual interactions” (Rose & Frieze, 1993, p. 499). Emerging from Goffman’s (1959) social constructionist paradigm, scripting theory holds that all human behavior is imbued with symbolic meaning and that human behavior unfolds in accordance with ritualized scripts. Thus, people interpret others’ behavior in relation to the script they think typifies the present situation and respond accordingly with the actions prescribed by the script. Simon and Gagnon (1986) applied scripting theory to human sexual behavior, rejecting the notion that sex is primarily a biological function and insisting that it is a social behavior that is highly ritualized and laden with symbolic meaning.

Sexual scripting theory has provided an explanatory framework in research on various aspects of sex, love, and romance. The theory has often been employed to negate claims that biological differences explain differences in sexual behavior between men and women. Instead, it maintains that men and women tend to act differently in romantic and sexual relationships because they hold different scripts (Simon & Gagnon 1986; Gagnon, 1990; Wiederman, 2005; Brickell, 2006). Accordingly, sexual scripting theory has been applied to topics like gendered dating scripts (Greene & Faulkner, 2005; Laner & Ventrone, 2000; Rose & Frieze, 1993; Rose & Frieze, 1989), condom usage (Bowleg, Lucas, & Tschann, 2004; Hynie, Lydon, Côté, & Wiener,
While this study focuses on the content of the sexual scripts depicted in the narratives of One Direction RPF stories, any interpretation of these scripts should be informed by an understanding of the different levels of social inputs that influence their production. According to sexual scripting theory, individuals learn and internalize scripts at the cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic levels. Cultural scripts involve societally enforced gender roles and may be derived from media and other social institutions (Simon & Gagnon, 1986; Sanchez, Flannigan, Guevara, Arango, & Hamilton, 2017; Beres, 2014). Interpersonal scripts develop from social actors’ transcription of cultural scripts to context-specific behavior (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). These scripts are obtained through socialization and inform which sexual behaviors should be enacted, in what order they should be enacted, what other activities they should be enacted in conjunction with, and during which situations they should be enacted (Beres, 2014). Sources of interpersonal sexual scripts may include familial gender-role ideology (Sanchez, Flannigan, Guevara, Arango, & Hamilton, 2017) and socialization with peers (Stephens & Phillips, 2005). Intrapsychic sexual scripts are internal dialogues that individuals cognitively rehearse in anticipation of employing interpersonal scripts, connecting individual desires with social meanings (Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Intrapsychic sexual scripts involve sexual attitudes, desires, identities, and fantasies (Sanchez, Flannigan, Guevara, Arango, & Hamilton, 2017; Beres, 2014; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). Simon and Gagnon’s original theoretical model posits that cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic scripts are necessary components of any human behavior, including sex, but each level’s impact on sexual behavior varies contextually.
While it seems likely that the sexual scripts depicted in a One Direction RPF story will contain elements of the author’s intrapsychic sexual scripts—since the act of writing an erotic narrative inherently involves cognitive rehearsal of a sexual interaction—these scripts do not provide a direct or holistic representation of the authors’ personal attitudes and ideals about sex and romance. Rather, they represent the product of a confluence of social factors that is tailored to a specific audience and that is afforded fictional license to defy the boundaries of realism. Therefore, while this study aims to use One Direction RPF narratives to glean meaningful insights about their authors’ intrapsychic scripts and their role as a source of interactional script development for readers, these insights must be tempered by a consideration of the cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic inputs that filter into and shape the production of these scripts under the conditions of the unique context of the One Direction fan community on Wattpad.com.

The scripts analyzed in this study also gain significance because of their production and circulation amongst adolescents and young adults. Simon and Gagnon theorized about the significance of the sexual scripts acquired during adolescence and early adulthood; they claim that adolescents’ cognitive rehearsal of intrapsychic scripts, although they are often not acted upon during adolescence, allow for a crystallization of sexual identity that may become an enduring hallmark of the adult intrapsychic. Thus, if integrated as an element of young participants’ sexual scripts, this content may have an impact on the way in which they approach sexual interactions throughout adulthood.

Therefore, this study will add to the body of existing research that has investigated both the content and effects of adolescents’ intrapsychic scripts. Through focus groups, Flannigan, Guevara, Arango, and Hamilton (2017) found that the different sexual scripts that African American and Mexican American girls received from their families shaped the ways in which
both groups were critical of sexualized portrayals of women in popular media. On the other hand, a survey of undergraduate women determined that amount of TV exposure and perceived realism of TV content were associated with higher endorsement of gendered sexual scripts with lower female sexual agency (Seabrook, Ward, Cortina, Giaccardi, & Lippman, 2017). Kreager, Staff, Gauthier, Lefkowitz, and Feinberg’s (2016) longitudinal study evidenced a double standard in boys and girls’ sexual scripts from 6th to 9th grade: girls who had sex reported losing friendships, while boys who had sex gained more friendships. However, girls who kissed boys reported gains in the number of friends at school, and boys reported that they lost male friendships for kissing girls (without sex) but did not report a social cost among female friends for kissing.

Krahé (2000) found that the prominence of risk elements—specifically alcohol and drug use, ambiguous communication of sexual intentions, and high levels of sexual activity— in individuals’ intrapsychic sexual scripts may be related to the risk of employing sexual aggression or being sexually victimized. Subsequent studies applied these risk factors to adolescents. Krahé, Bieneck, and Scheinberger-Olwig (2007a) found that German tenth and eleventh graders’ intrapsychic scripts for first consensual intercourse with a new partner contained fewer risk elements than the scripts they perceived to belong to others in their age group as a whole. Thus, the authors concluded that optimistic bias may affect teens’ reports of personal sexual attitudes and behaviors. The same authors also conducted a longitudinal study with German teens (2007b), finding that higher risk scores in teens’ individual scripts predicted sexual aggression among boys and sexual victimization among girls over the next two years.

Research has also examined sexual scripts concerning rape. Turchik, Probst, Irvin, Chau, & Gidycz (2009) asked college women to write short hypothetical narratives about rape, and
then they measured the women’s reports of sexual victimization after an academic quarter had passed. Their results found that college women who reported sexual victimization were more likely to have previously written narratives that involved “severe outdoor assault perpetrated by someone they knew less than 1 month” (p. 364). In short, women whose rape scripts did not resemble acquaintance rape were more likely to experience sexual assault. The authors reasoned that these women may be more vulnerable since they are “less likely to recognize important risk cues in contexts that do not fit their idea of a real rape” (p. 365). Krahé, Bieneck, and Scheinberger-Olwig (2007a) found that the teens in their study also reported rape scripts that involved force against a victim who showed active resistance. However, they found that boys were more likely than girls to additionally include elements characteristic of date rape in their rape scripts, like the use verbal pressure and lack of physical resistance by the victim.

**Gender as a multi-level system**

While the interrelationship between the cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic levels of scripting remains largely undefined in the body of research on sexual scripts, gender studies literature may offer more insight. Risman’s seminal book chapter “Gender as structure” (1998) describes gender as a structural property of society that is created and reinforced at structural, interactional, and individual levels—resembling the cultural, interpersonal, and intrapsychic levels of sexual scripting outlined by Simon and Gagnon (1986). Also like the sexual scripting literature, research in gender studies rejects claims of biological determinism. Rather, gender is theorized as something a person “does” and is analytically separate from biological sex. West and Zimmerman (1987) explain: “Gender, in contrast [to biologically determined sex categories], is the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (p. 127). Successive research in gender studies has
developed several theories about how gender is constructed at structural, interactional, and individual levels of analysis and how these levels interact.

Smith-Lovin and McPherson’s (1993a) network theory of gender inequality may be most relevant to this study. According to this theory, gender inequality ultimately stems from the differences in nature between men and women’s networks of social relationships. Network theory explains that women tend to form more interconnected social networks that require higher investments of time, emotional labor, etc. In contrast, men’s social networks tend to be less interconnected, meaning that they are able to form a larger quantity of simpler relationships in career settings and amongst friends because they do not require as intensive of investments. Smith-Lovin and McPherson explain (1993a) that as a result of these differences, men tend to have more expansive social networks that accordingly contain and circulate more information and opportunities. Over time, these small differences in access to information accumulate to produce large differences in attainment, which generates and fosters gender inequality.

However, Wattpad.com may have the potential to mitigate this disadvantageous organization of social networks for its participants, especially regarding information sharing of sexual scripts. The previous section provides evidence of an information gap between adolescent boys and girls regarding information about rape and sexual consent; teen boys are more likely than teen girls to hold rape scripts that resemble date rape, like coercion, while teen girls are more likely to hold rape scripts that resemble attack from a stranger (Krahé, Beinbeck, & Steinberger-Olwig, 2007). Research also suggests that this discrepancy of information regarding rape scripts may heighten teen girls’ vulnerability to sexual assault (Turchik et al, 2009). Smith-Lovin and McPherson (1993b) insist that all barriers to gender equality originate with differences in social network structures between men and women, constituting the underlying macro-level
mechanism of gender inequality that fuels other meso and micro-level sources of gender
inequality. According to this perspective, then, the apparent information gap between adolescent
boys and girls regarding rape scripts must be rooted in some way in the differences between their
social networks. Thus, Wattpad presents an interesting vehicle for social change; by connecting
its overwhelmingly young female participants to an expansive a network of millions of other
users discussing sex, the online community creates a unique opportunity for girls to diversify
their social networks in a way that diminishes or even eliminates the existing gap in sexual
information between boys and girls. Wattpad.com’s potential to create positive social change in a
way that lessens its participants’ vulnerability to sexual assault is contingent, however, upon the
content of the scripts that are circulated on the site. Thus, in my analysis of the dominant sexual
scripts in the One Direction RPF community on Wattpad.com, I will carefully consider whether
scripts about sexual consent, sexual assault, and rape are conceptualized in a way that would
diminish or reinforce the information gap between teen girls and boys described above.
Additionally, though, a thorough review of the fan studies literature, Wattpad.com, and the One
Direction fandom are also necessary to understand how other factors may complicate the
production, dissemination, and interpretation of the dominant sexual scripts within the
community.

Fan studies

Literature on media fandom and fanfiction postulates several possible motivators for
fanfiction writers to create sexual content. Some of these motivators involve dissatisfaction with
the cultural-level sexual scripts provided in mass media, including discontent with the original
text/media content’s failure to explore relationships between characters in favor of action-driven
plot (Jenkins, 1992; Bury, 2005) and frustration caused by the original text/media’s perpetuation
of heightened sexual tension with minimal depictions of sex (Becque, 2012). However, most writing and research about fanfiction agrees that producing sexual content offers a feminine and/or queer response to male, heterosexual-centered texts, which provides women and LGBTQ individuals with safe spaces to discuss sex without shame (Jenkins, 1992; Larsen & Zubernis, 2012; Bury, 2005; Woledge, 2005; Dandrow, 2016; Barnes, 2015).

In accordance with a feminist methodology, this body of literature frequently features the voices of fans, fanfiction writers, and fanfiction consumers (Jenkins, 1992; Bury, 2005; Lammers & Marsh, 2015; Woledge, 2005; Tian & Adorjan, 2016). Often, these fan voices testify to fandom’s positive impact on personal sexual scripts. Megger’s (2012) survey of 485 adult fans (with an average age of thirty-one) extensively reported fans’ responses to questions about the relationship between their participation in online fan communities that involve erotic fanfiction and their personal attitudes about sex. 55.7% of fans in Megger’s sample indicated that participating in online fandom influenced their personal attitudes about sex. Megger found three prominent themes in the fans’ reflections: they experienced reduced stigma towards diverse sexualities; increased self-acceptance of desires, kinks, sexual orientations, and gender identities; and improved sex education. For example, one fan wrote,

Well I used to be a homophobic asshole. Then I found slash [fanfiction narratives about homosexual couples] and it taught me to be accepting, and even open my eyes to my own sexuality. It’s also taught me lots more about sex than a health class ever could (p. 60).

While these fans’ self-reports of individual attitude change point to changing intrapyschic sexual scripts, their descriptions of how these changes occurred are more varied. While some stressed the importance of candid discussion of sexual topics with other fans, others emphasized the erotic fiction itself as driving their personal change. Only one response cited in the essay
mentioned the practice of writing fanfiction. Thus, it is still not clear what sexual scripts were most influential in promoting positive personal change and how they prompted it, in conjunction with other activities linked to participation in erotic fanfiction communities. Additionally, while the respondents extolled fanfiction’s impact on their opinions about sexuality, no responses reported in this article addressed the relationship between fanfiction and thoughts about gendered roles in sexual and romantic relationships.

Fan studies’ development as a field of scholarship has closely coincided with the evolution of the internet. Jenkins’s seminal work (1992) documented fandoms’ pre-digital existence, where fanfiction was circulated through self-published magazines, dubbed “fanzines,” and where fans’ main form of interaction occurred through smaller circles of friends, local clubs, and fan conventions. He also captured the impact of early computer “nets,” like Compuserve or Usenet, on fan communities. These closed online groups allowed fans to collectively document and gather information about their favorite television and media programs, including detailed recapitulations of each episode, analyses of the content, theories to predict future plot lines, and star actors’ interviews and other media appearances. These early net groups also facilitated the already established network of VCR sharing, so fans could borrow and replicate tapes of episodes they may have missed. Jenkins explained that fan VCR-sharing networks were so highly structured that fans could usually trace the lineage of their copied tapes’ origins across the fandom’s social network. Accounts of fandom from the late 1990s continued to describe close-knit and highly organized fan communities. Bury (2003) describes how many all-women communities banded together on private email listservs in response to harassment on male-dominated online fan forums. For example, the ironically named “Star Fleet Ladies Auxiliary and Embroidery/Baking Society” was established in 1993 and reached forty-eight members in its
peak. In the same year, female *X-Files* fans created the “David Duchovny Estrogen Brigade” (DDEB) to celebrate their favorite *X-Files* character. To meet the increasing demand for membership in these groups, the moderators created DDEB2 and DDEB3 and eventually capped their membership at fifty in 1994.

However, by the early and mid 2000s, changing technologies, namely online media, seemed to have afforded more varied uses and impacts on fan communities. Jenkins (2002) observed that while new online spaces allowed fans to communicate more frequently and more effectively organize consumer activism efforts, some fans felt “alienated from the expanding number of strangers entering their community” (p. 162). In 2013, Duffet wrote that “Blogging has become the new [fan]zine culture” (p. 185). He explained that although the “blogosphere” and reader comments on blogs create a network, blogs still constitute more individually focused spaces than the collaborative fanzine culture. He also compared the convenience and public nature of blogging to the labor intensive and more secluded nature of fanzines, claiming that “when fan publishing entered the digital era, it was as if the underground went overground” (p. 186). One popular blogging platforms for fans, LiveJournal, has similarly received mixed treatment in fan studies scholarship. The site’s design encourages social networking more than other blogging platforms (Brennan, 2014), and Kendall (2007) claims that the site promotes relationship building. However, Wellman (2001) argues that the site promotes a “networked individualism” that may still isolate users.

Zeynep Tufecki’s book (2017), *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*, may also help explain how internet technology has impacted fandom. In her research of social protest movements, Tufecki claims that while social media has enabled large numbers of protesters to assemble more quickly than in the pre-internet era, these quickly
assembled groups often lack the internal organizational structure to effectively make decisions, respond to challenges, and endure for long periods of time. Similarly, while new blogging and other online fanfiction platforms can quickly reach hundreds of millions of readers, it could be that the networked relationship structure of pre-internet fandoms may have dissolved in the transition to online spaces, resulting in a different conceptualization of the fan community and new expectations, uses, and valuation of fan communication (i.e., reader comments) by members of the online community (i.e., the fan fiction authors).

**Wattpad.com and youth fanfiction**

Wattpad.com was launched in 2006, prompting research about the fiction-writing platform’s size and structure (Thomas, 2015). Mary Meeker’s 2015 annual report on internet trends records that 100 million stories have been uploaded on the site, and at least 250,000 are shared each day. User statistics indicate that 80% of the site’s users are under the age of 25 and mostly female (Korobkova & Black, 2014), and Wattpad’s blog reported that although 77% of the site’s content is written in English, the site is available in over 50 languages and 63% of users are registered outside of North America (“The International Language of Storytelling”). The structure of Wattpad allows writers to post their stories serially by chapter, and within the stories readers can leave comments on individual paragraphs within the story. Although no research to my knowledge has considered the implications of Wattpad.com’s structure, Tian, and Adorjan (2016) found that a similar website structure in a Chinese fanfiction community supported a reciprocal writing process, where fans’ feedback and requests on each chapter significantly influenced the authors’ decisions as they continued writing. However, readers in this setting pay to read content and thus wield more influence over authors’ creative license than readers on Wattpad.com. Nonetheless, in my research on Wattpad.com, I have seen that it is common for
authors to directly address their readers in an “author’s note” at the end of each chapter, offering explanations for their writing choices, soliciting and addressing feedback, and encouraging readers to vote for their story. This ongoing, reciprocal dialogue between readers and writers on Wattpad.com further entangles the interactions between fans’ intrapsychic sexual scripts and the interactional influence that reader feedback could have in the production of the sexual scripts in One Direction RPF stories. Yet, given the extremely high volume of readers and reader feedback that authors receive on Wattpad.com, it seems that this dialogue is symptomatic of blogging platforms’ loose network ties (Jenkins, 2002; Duffet, 2013; Wellman, 2001), compared to the highly organized social networks of pre and early-digital fandoms.

The anonymity afforded by Wattpad.com may also impact the interpersonal exchange of sexual scripts on the site. Although some Wattpad.com users choose to disclose their names and social media accounts, many users conceal their identity by constructing their user profiles in terms of their fandom, with usernames like “MalikIsSexy” and profile pictures of the former band members. According to Larsen and Zubernis (2012), anonymity in fan communities creates a safe space for participants to discuss sexual desires and other personal topics. Similarly, in their interviews with fans on Tumblr.com, a microblogging and social network website, Hillman, Procyk, and Neustaedter (2014) found that fans attributed their experiences of feeling more free to be their authentic selves to their anonymous status on the site. Thus, the lowered levels of inhibition and self-censoring that users may experience on Wattpad.com may shape the way in which fans interactionally construct the sexual and gendered scripts present in One Direction RPF. Additionally, Phillips and Milner (2017) emphasize the reciprocal influence of online audiences on individual “masks,” whether the masks are curated portrayals of the self or anonymous profiles. They explain that, when individuals participate in online spaces, they
inevitably adjust their “mask” in reaction to their audience’s responses and feedback. The anonymity possible on Wattpad.com and the site’s loosely structured social network may heighten the ability to which users can adjust their masks, since their masks may not be bound to a particular identity nor consistently received by the same group of people. This process even further complicates the relationship between interpersonal and intrapsychic scripting and the sexual scripts produced in One Direction RPF, since participants’ presentation of the intrapsychic sexual scripts may be interactionally constructed as well.

Other research on Wattpad.com emphasizes its benefits for young participants, considering its potential as an English language and vocabulary learning tool for youths (Sari, 2016; Garcia, 2016). Fan studies scholarship on other youth-focused fanfiction communities similarly praises it as an opportunity for youth to develop critical reading and writing skills. For example, Lammers and Marsh’s article “Going Public: An Adolescent’s Networked Writing on Fanfiction.net” (2015) profiles the experiences of a 16-year-old’s fanfiction writing about the Broadway musical *Wicked*. The authors found that the girl’s involvement on fanfiction.net helped her develop writing skills that are often unaddressed in high school curriculum, like anticipating and catering to the expectations of an abstract audience. The authors suggest that these skills likely contributed to the girl’s academic success in English and literature courses.

A smaller amount of research has studied the prevalence of romantic and sexual relationships among youth fanfiction communities. Some of the adult fans in Megger’s (2012) study reflected upon their past experiences in fanfiction communities as adolescents. While the respondents themselves acknowledged that “it was difficult to separate changes that occurred because of fandom participation from changes that occurred because of simple sexual maturation due to the temporal overlap” (p.75), most responses highlighted the importance of erotic
fanfiction as a positive educational resource. Several respondents explained that since their family or friends didn’t candidly discuss sex, erotic fanfiction provided much needed information missing from their sex education. As one fan summarized, “Thanks to the knowledge I have gleaned through my time as a fan, I have remained safe and intelligent through my sexual behaviors in the meantime” (p.71). McLelland (2016) uses similar logic to oppose growing restrictions to teens’ access to information about sex online. Synthesizing research on Harry Potter and Japanese animation fanfiction communities as evidence, McLelland concludes that there is an “absence of any research pointing to the dangers of young people engaging in these kinds of online fantasy spaces” (p.17) and that “these online sexualized fantasy spaces could be seen as a safe space [for adolescents] to explore and develop ‘sexual literacies’” without adult interference (p. 18).

While McLelland briefly cited research that noted the presence of coercive sex, rape, violence, and abjection in Harry Potter erotic fanfiction, he only considered its function as a plot tool. Fast, Vachovsky, and Bernstein’s (2016) research, however, provides more evidence on these themes’ prevalence on Wattpad.com; their statistical analysis of over 600,000 stories demonstrated that, across the site, males are most likely to be portrayed as arrogant, active, violent, angry, or sexual while females are most likely to be described as childish, hysterical, submissive, afraid, or domestic.

However, the prominence of these themes is not unique to Wattpad.com or youth fanfiction in general. While the adult fans featured in Bury’s (2005) analysis of X-Files fan communities insistently distanced themselves from fanfiction stories depicting rape, they acknowledged their existence within the fandom. A fan featured in Jenkins’s work (2006) claimed that, in fanfiction stories featuring rape, “The point of the story isn’t the rape; it’s how
the characters deal with the rape” (p. 84). Deffenbacher (2014) analyzed the literary constructs that make rape narratives more palatable in both romantic fiction and fanfiction. Several of these tropes included invoking the offender’s paranormal nature as a justification for sexually aggressive behavior, differentiating the female protagonist from stereotypically feminine romantic heroines, juxtapositioning the offender’s sexually coercive behavior with “real” stranger rape, and featuring female protagonists’ retroactive consent. Additionally, narratives fantasizing rape may be reflective of many women’s real life experiences. In a survey of 355 college women, Bivona & Critelli (2009) found that 62 percent of women reported having had a rape fantasy, while 14 percent reporting having rape fantasies once a week. These fantasies were classified on an aversive-erotic continuum, with 9 percent considered completely aversive, 45 percent considered completely erotic, and 46 percent considered both aversive and erotic.

The presence of rape and sexually abusive scripts on Wattpad.com is not an anomaly in fanfiction at large, and the website’s structural affordances are situated within fandom’s technological evolution. Therefore, the findings from this study may be relevant to other online fanfiction platforms as well. However, the site’s extremely high volume of traffic and dominantly young female audience (Korobkova & Black, 2014) add social significance to this research’s focus on Wattpad.com. This research will attempt to unravel the mechanisms behind fans’ interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual scripts and understand their relationship to the prevalence of themes of rape, abuse, and patriarchal dominance in One Direction RPF. While teen RPF is not unique to One Direction, the following section will explore why the One Direction fandom is socially, theoretically, and methodologically significant to this research.

**One Direction Fandom**
The size, success, and intensity of the One Direction fandom undeniably contribute to the social significance of this study. The band’s impressive accolades certainly testify to the fan base’s remarkable size. Just to name a few, their debut album, *Up All Night*, sold 4.5 million copies in 2012, making it the third best-selling album internationally for the year, and their first performance at Madison Square Garden sold out in ten minutes (Bernberg, 2013). Their 2015 “On The Road Again” tour sold over 2.36 million tickets—more than Taylor Swift or Ed Sheeran’s ticket sales for that year (Ingham, 2016). One Direction’s extensive social media following also demonstrates their massive fan following. Currently, the music video for their hit single “What Makes You Beautiful” has over 899 million views on YouTube, the official One Direction Twitter account has 31.7 million followers, band member Harry Styles has 31.4 million followers, and the official One Direction Facebook page has 38.5 million likes. Although One Direction unofficially dissolved in 2015 as it entered an indefinite “hiatus,” the band members’ popularity continues to flourish across Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, and Youtube as they pursue their individual music careers.

The sheer size of the One Direction fandom renders any social phenomenon occurring within it socially significant. However, the fans’ intense level of devotion compounds this significance—given their high levels of emotional investment in the band, they likely experience the fandom more deeply and passionately than other teen fandoms with RPF. Fans have spent days, even a whole week, standing in line for a chance to see the band perform (Goodwin, 2012; “18,000-plus One Direction fans”, 2013). Fan created Twitter accounts, like @Niall_Updatess, @TheHarryNews, @TheHarrySource, and @LouisWTNews, organize “streaming parties” among their followers (each account ranging from 64,800 to over 171,000 followers) to boost the Billboard rankings of band members’ new songs, hold “vote attacks” when band members are
nominated for awards, and comprehensively synthesize each band members’ media appearances, fan sightings of the band members, and social media activity—down to each time a band member likes or favorites a social media post. These accounts also promote and retweet fans’ personal marketing initiatives, like hanging promotional flyers and posters around their hometowns. In addition to heightening the social significance of phenomena in the fandom, the demonstrated intensity of fans’ devotion may have profound implications for scripting theory—it seems likely that high levels of fan devotion could intensify or otherwise affect the way that RPF participants intrapsychically internalize sexual scripts acquired via the fandom.

These implications are especially noteworthy given the prevalence of rape and abuse themes in One Direction RPF and in One Direction’s media itself. In my previous research, which I presented at the 2016 Pop Culture Association in the South/American Culture Association in the South Conference, I found that suggestions of rape, sexual aggression, and violence are present One Direction’s song lyrics, Snapchat account, and a music video. Furthermore, the structure of the media containing these suggestions either mimics the perspective of someone interacting with the band members or places listeners/viewers in the perspective of the band members themselves. In short, fans are encouraged to both imagine dating and imagine being the band members, who are depicted as sexually violent. Although I intend to focus on interpersonal and intrapsychic sexual scripting in this research, the inductive research methods I propose below allow flexibility for any emergent findings about the relationship between One Direction’s media and fans’ cultural sexual scripts.

Finally, the One Direction fandom is crucial to the methodology of this study. The small amount of research that has studied One Direction fans on Wattpad.com acknowledges the complexity of “Directioner” culture, noting the wide range of modern pop culture knowledge
wielded in fan communities (Korobkova & Rafalow 2016, Korobkova & Black, 2014) and the supreme importance of the One Direction “fanon”—or fandom cannon, which includes song lyrics, details about the band members’ lives and social media accounts, popular RPF stories, memes, and specific slang (Korobkova & Rafalow 2016, Korobkova & Black, 2014). While this literature acknowledges the fandom’s complexity, it doesn’t tackle how it works, operates, or functions, presumably because it is impenetrable to the outsider. Korobkova & Black (2014) aptly explain that the identity work required to establish oneself as an authentic One Direction fangirl involves “mobilizing specific epistemic, linguistic, and literate resources…to be literate or knowledgeable as a fangirl, one must be steeped in particular discourses.” (p. 620).

However, as a millennial and longtime fan of One Direction, I wield the cultural capital necessary to understand the discourse, intricate web of fanon references, and inside jokes that drive One Direction fan activity on Wattpad.com. I have followed the band’s career since my senior year of high school in 2012, purchasing all their albums, attending a concert, following the band members on social media (Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat), and watching a countless number of the band members’ interviews and media appearances posted on Youtube over the years. As I began developing a research interest in fan studies in my undergraduate courses, I started reading small amounts of fanfiction in the One Direction and other fandoms with a critical interpretive lens, eventually including an in-depth analysis of a One Direction RPF story from onedirectionfanfiction.com in my undergraduate thesis. In other words, although I haven’t actively participated in an online fan community, I am still confidently literate in the One Direction fanon and uniquely have access to the One Direction fandom.

**Research Questions**
Inspired by the literature on sexual scripts, gender studies, and fan studies, the present study addresses the following research questions using a textual analysis of One Direction RPF stories on Wattpad.com:

RQ1: What sexual scripts are dominant in One Direction RPF on Wattpad.com?
   a. How do the scripts in these narratives portray females’ roles in romantic relationships?
   b. How do the scripts in these narratives portray sexual relationships, sexual consent, rape, and sexual violence?

As indicated above, I will conduct a textual analysis of One Direction RPF stories on Wattpad.com. The resulting data will reveal what types of scripts about sex and gendered roles in romantic relationships are most prevalent in the community. In addition to contributing to the fields of psychology and gender studies’ knowledge about adolescents’ sexual scripts, this research addresses specific gaps in the fan studies literature—the presence of rape, sexually abusive, and patriarchal narratives in young female fanfiction spaces and the role of technology’s continued development in shaping online fan communities.
Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This study consists of a textual analysis of the most popular One Direction RPF stories on Wattpad.com. My purpose in targeting the most popular stories is to reach the conversation leaders in this community; their written content generates the most discussion on the website and constitutes the most-viewed and arguably most influential sexual scripts in the community.

Sample and Procedure

I used a sampling method that was stratified according to the band member portrayed as the love interest in the story. This method compensated for potential differences in content between stories about different band members. For example, narratives about band member Zayn Malik, commonly known among fans as “the mysterious one,” (Gibsone, 2015) might differ in nature from stories about Niall Horan, who is frequently portrayed as the sweet or goofy band member (Gibsone, 2015)—the qualities that the author values in a romantic partner, which would likely influence the content of their story, may coincide with which band member s/he writes about.

To obtain a stratified sample, first I searched each band member’s name on Wattpad.com’s search bar and looked through the first two hundred search results. For each band member’s search results, I identified the five most popular stories then copy-and-pasted them into Atlas.ti 8, a qualitative data analysis software. One out of the twenty-five stories identified was not included in the analysis because its narrative centered on a homosexual relationship.
between two band members, which fell outside this scope of this study’s interest the portrayal of females’ roles in romantic relationships and sexual interactions.

In analyzing the data, I modeled the approaches of several contemporary scholars who strategically combine the benefits of traditional interpretive-focused approaches to qualitative data analysis with the rigor of systematic processes for data analysis. In her book *Salsa Dancing with the Social Sciences* (2012), Kristin Luker explains that effective qualitative research utilizes inductive systematic coding, but simultaneously involves the researcher in engaging in other activities, like discussing and debating emerging analytic theories with colleagues and reading diverse scholarly literatures relevant to the data. Luker also emphasizes the importance of coding for patterns instead of searching for linear relationships, since this practice better preserves the social meanings underlying complex relationships between different patterns in the data. Daniel Kreiss describes a similar analytic process in the methodological appendix for his book, *Prototype politics: Technology-intensive campaigning and the data of democracy* (2016). Kreiss described fusing his analytic coding process with a commitment to “living” with his data, which includes activities like paraphrasing pieces of the data in his own words, reorganizing the data chronologically in a strategy of “narrative sense-making,” and reading extensively from relevant scholarship in order to try out different theoretical perspectives and tools to see which fit the data in interesting ways (p.232). Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) emphasize the practice of writing theoretical memos throughout the coding process to ensure thoughtful reflection of symbolic social meaning. According to the authors, early in the coding process, theoretical memos should focus on simply making sense of the types of behaviors and phenomena the researcher is encountering in the data. However, as the coding process progresses, researchers should begin memo writing about the complex connections between the patterns emerging in their coding to
uncover what these emergent connections say about the symbolic social meanings in the data. They eloquently liken the iterative process of shifting between context-specific social meanings and abstracting to generalizable social phenomena to “someone who is simultaneously creating and solving a puzzle, or like a carpenter alternately changing the shape of a door and then the shape of the door frame to obtain a better fit” (p.144).

I used a combination of these contemporary approaches to analyze my data. Because the activities of teen fangirls remain largely unexplored in the fan studies literature, a description of the complexities and nuances of the content they produce and publish online is a significant contribution of this research in and of itself, and I prioritized a commitment to describing the rich social meanings embedded throughout the data. I maintained systematic rigor by utilizing Atlas.ti 8 to effectively organize and manage analysis of this large dataset, which consisted of twenty-four One Direction RPF stories that ranged from 30 to 179 chapters long. Atlas.ti 8 has several functions that are conducive to coding that accurately analyzes the intricacies of social meaning: it easily allows users to combine, divide, and rename codes; it allows users to attach extended memos to specific pieces of data; it enables calculation of the co-occurrence of codes to facilitate the exploration of patterned phenomena; and it enables calculation of the frequency with which different codes precede, overlap, enclose, and follow each other to analyze the significance of different patterns. Finally, throughout the analytic process, I discussed, evaluated, and revised emerging codes and themes with my advisor, in addition to consulting scholarship from the fields of study outlined in my thesis proposal, including fan studies, media effects, and gender studies. The strategies described above facilitated an analysis that is both systematic and quantifiable but that also carefully attends to the symbolic meanings behind the complex online behavior of young female One Direction fans.
While I am confident that my proximity to the One Direction fandom is the key to the validity of this research, I carefully heeded Baym’s advice in *Internet Inquiry: Conversations About Method* (2009) and critically reflect on how my perspective as a fan shapes each part of the research process. Discussing the importance of reflexivity in any qualitative research, but especially online, she explains: “Our work is strengthened when we second-guess ourselves and think deeply about how our background and personal reactions shape our research focus, approach, and interpretation…To do this well, researchers must not only engage in continuous honest reflection on their own experience but they must also show how those reflections lead to insights” (p. 181).

In accordance with the fan studies paradigm, I embraced my identity as an “aca-fan”—simultaneously an academic and a fan—as an asset that allows me to understand fanon-laden discourse and appreciate the complexity of fannish activities. Jenkins (1992) explained the fault in former positivist approaches to fandom, since “In the past, scholars with little direct knowledge or emotional investment within the fan community have transformed fandom into a projection of their personal fears, anxieties, and fantasies about the dangers of mass culture” (p.6). While the field of fan studies has since labored to validate fandom and dismantle critics’ claims of pathological behavior, it has often done so at the cost of shifting the weight of these cultural anxieties on the behavior of young female fans. For example, the adult *X-Files* fans featured in Bury’s *Cyberspaces of their own: Female fandoms online* condemn a fellow fan who behaved “like such a teenybopper” (p. 40) during a televised interview with the *X-Files*’s male protagonist, comparing her “gushing” behavior to “losing control of one’s bladder in public” (p.41). Similarly, although Hills (2012) includes a rebuttal from a fan group whose behavior was largely rejected as overly emotional and embarrassing, it still reproduces a rhetoric that belittles
young females. One fan featured in this article explained, “…this sort of emotional campaign is exactly what gives us supposedly grown-up fans a bad name” (p.30). Another fan elaborated, “Seriously people, you’re making yourselves—and by extension, the rest of us fans—look ridiculous” (p. 30). Dandrow acknowledges fandoms’ habit of saving face by degrading certain groups as too extreme, explaining, “fans tend to group themselves and to distance themselves from other groups, as if Othering groups that are somehow worse will make their group seem less crazy” (p.10).

Often times, young female fans are pegged as the “groups that are somehow worse.” Therefore, just as Jenkins (1992) wielded his own direct knowledge and emotional investment in fan communities to ensure their accurate and respectful portrayal in his work, I extended the same diligence to the One Direction fans in this study in attempt to debunk the prevailing cultural stereotype of “fangirls” as hysterical. However, I also maintained my commitment to feminist scholarship by critically analyzing the potential normalization of rape culture, physical and emotional abuse, patriarchal dominance perpetuated by some One Direction RPF stories. *A priori*, no singular solution for negotiating this tension between celebrating and criticizing young female fans’ experiences clearly stands out as the best course of action. Nonetheless, this tension is central to my involvement in this research, and aimed to critically reflect upon my analytic perspective throughout this research.

Although strategic, the specificity of this study’s sample is also still a limitation to this research. Not all One Direction RPF authors publish their work on Wattpad.com, and not all highly devoted One Direction fans participate in RPF communities; this research will not be representative of the entire One Direction fandom or of teen girl fandoms in general. However, this specific group of young fans wields the ability to shape the discourse about sexual
relationships within an extensive community of adolescent and young women—a topic that often remains tabooed for this demographic in non-anonymous spaces. By learning more about how these topics are conceptualized and discussed within the community, we may be able to harness these authors’ success in a way that empowers these fans against rape culture. The literature review above synthesized research that demonstrated the significance of intrapsychic rape scripts; young women with rape scripts that describe stranger assault instead of acquaintance rape are more likely to experience sexual assault (Turchik, Probst, Irvin, Chau, & Gidycz, 2009), but teen girls may be more likely to hold rape scripts only involving stranger assault (Krahé, Bieneck, and Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007a). If this research uncovers potential strategies for promoting literacy of acquaintance rape scripts among young female fan communities, this information could be applicable to other fandoms and communities of young women.
Chapter 4: RESULTS

All stories in the dataset involved kissing. However, only nine included graphic descriptions of sex and five indicated that sex occurred, but these five ended the narrative as the sexual interaction is beginning or before it occurs. Significantly, no stories about Niall or Liam featured graphic descriptions of sex, confirming the presence of qualitative differences in content between stories about different band members. This difference likely stems from the different personality roles the band members are frequently portrayed as fulfilling; Niall is frequently portrayed as the sweet and goofy member of the group, Liam is the down-to-earth or “meet the parents” personality, and in contrast, Zayn and Harry hold the mysterious and womanizer reputations (Gibsone, 2015; Holcomb, 2013). Therefore, the rest of this analysis continues to stratify data by band member in order to more accurately represent the range of the different scripts in the data. The table below features the number of stories featuring each level of sexual interaction (kissing, sex implied, or graphic description of sex) according to which band member was featured as the primary romantic interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band member</th>
<th>Harry</th>
<th>Liam</th>
<th>Louis</th>
<th>Niall</th>
<th>Zayn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graphic description of sex</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex without description</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only kissing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1- Level of sexual interaction according to band member

31
Gendered sexual scripts

When exploring the content of the sexual scripts woven throughout this dataset, clear differences between male and female roles quickly emerged as a central component of most sexual interactions. As is described below, the frequencies of different elements of physical and sexual interaction—specifically, initiating kissing and sexual activity and active participation during kissing and sexual activity—used scripts of male dominance, in that the band members in these stories disproportionately initiated and participated in kissing and sexual activity, compared to the actions of female characters. This difference in frequency sets the backdrop for the emergent themes in the data regarding the language describing the physical interactions between males and females, suggesting that the discourse further supports the dominance of male interests.

Initiating sexual activity

Kissing. Males initiated kissing 412 times and female initiated kissing 167 times. The following graph shows the frequency with which males and females initiated kissing, according to which band member was featured as the primary romantic interest.

In three out of five of band member categories, males initiated kissing much more frequently than females: Niall, the category containing the highest number of stories that only contained kissing, and Harry and Zayn, the two categories with the highest number of stories containing graphic
descriptions of sex. The discrepancy was less pronounced in categories that were characterized by the presence of sex without graphic descriptions. Important to note, kissing was counted as “initiated” if this activity was referenced either verbally (character declared their intent to kiss) or physically (character actually performed a kiss).

*Other sexual activity.* As shown in the following graph, males initiated sexual activity beyond kissing 70 times, whereas females initiated sexual activity 37 times (sexual activity initiation was also counted if it was verbally or physically initiated). Stories about Harry, which all featured graphic descriptions of sex, contained the largest discrepancy between males and females in initiating sex. Zayn’s stories, three of which included graphic descriptions of sex, had the second largest gap between frequency of male and female initiating sexual activity, followed by a small difference between male and female frequency of initiating sex in Louis’s stories, only one of which included graphic descriptions of sex. Stories about Liam and Niall were notable exceptions where female initiation was the same or greater than male initiation; yet, note that there were also few instances of sexual activity in their stories, compared to the other band members. Thus, the most detailed sexual scripts in the dataset highly favored sex initiated by males over sex initiated by females.

![Figure 3- Initiating sexual activity](image_url)
Prevalence of males’ vs. females’ active participation during sexual activity

When the character intentionally performed any physical action while kissing, I coded this act as active participation during kissing. The purpose of this measure was to capture how often characters actively participated in kissing interactions, as opposed to merely reacting to a partner’s actions or describing thoughts and feelings related to kissing. Thus, bodily reactions to a partner’s kissing, like involuntarily sighing or becoming erect, were not included in this code.

To consistently distinguish active participation during kissing from active participation during sexual activity, I coded all actions following undressing or sexual touching underneath clothes/undergarments as active participation during sexual activity. I coded all actions preceding undressing, including sexual touching above clothes, as active participation during kissing. If characters removed clothes or undergarments while kissing but did not pursue further sexual activity, the actions were still coded as active participation during kissing. However, if characters pursued sexual activity with undergarments still intact, i.e. sexual touching over undergarments until orgasm, then the actions were coded as active participation during sexual activity.

Kissing. Since word count more accurately reflected the narrative space allocated for active participation than frequency of codes employed, I used the frequency of words devoted to this type of sexual activity to understand the relative prominence of male versus female participation in kissing and other sexual acts. The following graph illustrates the word count devoted to the description of male and female active participation during kissing.
In total, the word count for male active participation during kissing was 21,415 words, and the word count for female active participation during kissing was half that amount, at 10,753 words. The discrepancies between male and female active participation during kissing was also relatively similar regardless of which band member was featured; each category of band member exhibited a clear inequity between male and female active participation during kissing.

Other sexual activity. Active participation during sexual activity beyond kissing was applied when the character performed any action during sexual activity than was not merely an involuntary reaction to a partners’ actions or a description of feelings in response to a partners’ actions. Thus, bodily reactions like involuntarily arching the back or becoming erect, were not included in this code. Similarly, moaning or screaming were generally not included, unless the verbalization contained directions for a partners’ behavior, as these would indicate exerting influence over the way the sexual activity proceeded. While not necessarily sexual in and of themselves, actions like kissing or running fingers through the partner’s hair were included if they were performed during the sexual activity, as these were interpreted as the character actively participating in the sexual interaction. The protocol for distinguishing between active
participation during kissing and active participation during sexual activity is detailed above in the kissing section.

The total word count for male active participation during sexual activity was 18,295 words, and the word count for female active participation during sexual activity was 8,787 words. As expected, word counts were low for stories with no graphic descriptions of sex, so differences between male and female active participation during sex for stories about Niall and Liam are negligible. However, as the following graph shows, males in the other stories clearly served as the dominant actors in sexual interactions.

Themes defining the nature of active participation

The measurements of frequencies during which males and females initiated and actively participated in kissing and sexual activity demonstrate a clear division between male and female roles in sexual scripts; physical interactions between males and females were primarily initiated
and driven by males. A closer look at descriptions of kissing and sexual activities in these stories further reinforces a masculinist conceptualization of these activities.

_Females supplement._ For example, females’ actions appeared to be more likely than males’ actions to describe behavior that was supplemental but not directly in reference to the primary sexual activity itself (i.e., the actual intercourse)—touching their partner’s hair, shoulders, back, and abdomen were primarily referenced for females. Descriptions like, “My hands ran up and down his bare and broad back, my nails digging into his skin slightly” from _P.S. I Hate You_ and “My hands making their way back up to his hair, fingers running through his silky tousled curls that I loved so much” from _Brother’s Best Friend_ constitute hallmarks of females’ participation in sexual narratives. In contrast, males’ actions tended to focus more exclusively on the sex act in progress. However, this trend was not as prevalent within female active participation during kissing, where females seemed closer to equal in performing specific kissing actions.

_Attack of the kiss._ While coding inductively, a theme regarding aggressive and assaultive language to describe kissing and sex also emerged as prevalent across the dataset. This code was employed 96 times to describe the presence of phrases like “assault on his neck,” “attack on her lips,” “slammed into her” and “crashed onto his lips” to describe actions performed by males and females during kissing or sexual activity. For the most part, this language did not actually describe sexual assault—the code only co-occurred with other codes indicating instances of sexual assault and nonconsensual physical activity eight times. Rather, this language permeates the regular physical interactions between males and females in the dataset.

For example, when Harry and Carter paused to share a kiss in the midst of a flirty food fight in _Bad Meets Good_, author “zarrysupreme” wrote, “His not so gentle assault on my lips
surely did leave my neck giving off a tingling sensation.” A few moments later, Carter’s narration of the interaction continued to emphasize aggressive force: “His lips slammed against mine and I felt my whole body literally move back slightly from the force.” This description of Harry’s kissing involving being “slammed” after a “not so gentle assault” creates a jarring contrast with the rest of the scene’s light-hearted imagery, where the two “looked like a bunch of kids running around the kitchen throwing cake batter at one another.” Although this language sometimes described females’ actions as well (co-occurring with female active participation in kissing and sexual activity thirteen times), the framing of sexual activity through assaultive language was nonetheless more common for male-initiated activity and therefore seems to prioritize machismo as a frame for understanding physical interactions.

_A surprise kiss._ Additionally, I documented the frequency with which characters surprised a romantic partner with an unexpected kiss or other sexual action. To trigger the use of this code, the receiving character must have described being surprised or startled by a partner’s sudden act, not having time to react to the partner’s action. For example, the following interaction from _Brother’s Best Friend_ by “stylescloud” exemplifies this type of action:

…he glared at me icily for a good brief two seconds before he strides toward me. I stumble back, feeling threatened but I don't have any time to react when he wraps his hands around my neck, pulling me forward and smacking our lips harshly against one another.

In total, males surprised females with a kiss or other sexual action 52 times across the dataset, compared to females’ 14 times where they initiated the surprise. Although surprise actions related to kissing and sex were often received with enthusiasm (i.e., in _Brother’s Best Friend_, the female protagonist narrates: “I’m shocked at first from his sudden action. But I
quickly fall into the pit of comfort that is Harry’s kiss”), these actions sometimes hindered the recipient’s ability to negotiate consent or served to obscure violations of the recipient’s intentions. In *Bad Meets Good*, Carter unintentionally kisses someone other than her boyfriend, Harry, because of the confusion created by the “surprise action” of her male best friend. In the story, “She goes to open her mouth to say something but he,” the friend, “cuts her off by smashing his lips on hers. He presses himself against her on the wall and she’s left dumbfounded and she does the unthinkable and kisses him back with just as much force.” When she quickly comes to her senses, Carter immediately attempts to break the kiss. After he dismisses her verbal protests, she slaps him to finally end the interaction. When explaining the situation and resulting hickies to Harry, though, Carter accepts responsibility for the kiss that she was forced into, claiming it as a mistake she made. She pleads, “Harry, I swear to God it was a mistake. I didn’t know what I was doing.”

In addition to serving as a means for placing blame on victims of forced physical interaction, when employed in clearly consensual sexual interactions, this surprise action appeared to reinforce an ideal of brash masculine dominance, showing this dominance as desirable. In *Illegally Yours* by “_DaniMoon_,” for instance, Louis and Frida speedily enter a sexual interaction after a prolonged separation, hastily establishing consent and immediately engaging in foreplay that Frida enjoys. When initiating vaginal intercourse, though, Louis’s actions constitute a “male ‘surprise’ action.” Frida narrates: “He unbuckled and unbuttoned his belt and jeans in a matter of seconds. Before I could even process what was about to happen, I felt his erection push all the way inside of me as he roughly thrust his hips, causing my back to hit the wall with full force.” Since Frida eagerly receives and subsequently praises his speedily-
initiated vaginal intercourse, her narration serves to praise a style of sexual interaction that, if translated to other contexts, would eliminate females’ opportunities to negotiate consent.

The emergent themes of language of aggression and attack to describe kissing and sexual activity and “surprise” actions both serve to bolster the male’s upper hand in these narratives, often valorizing sudden and aggressive behavior that silences female voices and actions. Even when these themes applied to female behavior, I felt these actions only served to normalize this male-typed behavior as typical of romantic interactions.

*Hurts so good.* Although not as prevalent throughout the sexual interactions depicted, female pain or discomfort during kissing and sex still emerged as a salient element of females’ experiences in romantic interactions. The following table illustrates the frequency with which any mention of female pain or discomfort occurred during sex and during kissing, stratified by band member.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band member</th>
<th>Harry</th>
<th>Liam</th>
<th>Louis</th>
<th>Niall</th>
<th>Zayn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female pain/discomfort related to sex</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female pain/discomfort during kissing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6- Female pain/discomfort

Not surprisingly, pain during sex occurred most frequently in the categories with the highest number of stories involving graphic descriptions of sex. Of the sixteen instances of female pain/discomfort during sex, only one co-occurred with female hesitance/unease for sexual interaction and only one co-occurred with male coercion (see Negotiation of Consent section below for more discussion of these codes). Amongst the eight instances of female pain/discomfort during kissing, co-occurrences only occurred once with hesitance/unease for kissing, male coercion, and male ignoring female not wanting to continue kissing/sex. Thus, pain during sex or kissing was not strongly tied to nonconsensual interactions. Furthermore, only five
of the sixteen times the code female pain/discomfort during sexual activity was employed were related to the loss of virginity. Rather, female pain during sex and kissing was most often portrayed as a normal and recurring element of the feminine romantic experience, co-occurring with male active participation during sexual activity ten times and with male active participation during kissing seven times.

In summary, the distribution of frequencies for initiating and actively participating during kissing and sexual interactions clearly indicates that males dominate the physical interactions between females and males in these stories. Additionally, the linguistic construction of these sexual scripts further emphasizes females’ auxiliary roles in physical interactions and favors masculinist values like aggression and impulsive behavior that disregards its impact on others. The primacy of these values is paired with the prevalence of females’ experiences of pain within the same narratives.

**Negotiating consent**

This section of the analysis carefully considers the negotiations of consent present in these narratives and the themes that surfaced as relevant to these discussions of consent. First, a measurement of consent’s frequency within different moments during sexual interactions frames a discussion of the different ways that sexual consent is negotiated throughout the dataset. Then, I present the analysis of how different themes related to consent—specifically hesitation or unease for sexual interaction, assumption of consent, and sexual violence—contribute to different conceptualizations of what sexual consent means and what behaviors represent a violation of consent.

**Chronological placement of consent within an interaction**
Negotiation of consent varied widely in the place it occurred during a sexual encounter. The code “kissing/non-sex” describes a negotiation of consent for kissing or receipt of other non-sexual physical behaviors, like cuddling. “Not having sex” refers to a discussion about and agreement to not having sex at the moment. The code “before sexual activity” refers to a negotiation of consent that occurred before the initiation of kissing or before the initiation of sexual activity. “Before sexual act” indicates a negotiation of consent that occurred after the initiation of sexual activity but before the initiation of a sex act involving the genitals, i.e. vaginal intercourse or manual/oral stimulation. The code “continuing sex act” refers to a negotiation of consent that occurred after the initiation of a sex act.

The following graph shows the frequency of each code of negotiation, in order of progression of activity from initiation through genital activity. In total, “kissing/non-sex” was present 23 times, “not having sex” was present 25 times, “before sexual activity” 47 times, “before sex act” 26 times, and “continuing sex act” 19 times.

![Figure 7- Negotiating consent](image-url)
As expected, frequencies for total instances of consent negotiation were highest for the band member with the most stories with graphic depictions of sex (Harry) and descended accordingly. However, band members whose stories did not contain graphic descriptions of sex still contained the lowest frequencies for negotiations of consent for kissing/non-sexual physical behavior and for not having sex. For stories written about Harry, which all contain graphic descriptions of sex, consent was most often negotiated before initiating sexual activity, occurring 27 times, followed by negotiation of consent before a sex act occurring 15 times, and consent for continuing sex acts occurring 6 times. For stories written about Louis, frequency of negotiations of consent followed a similar pattern according to chronological placement within a sexual interaction, with sexual consent occurring most frequently before initiating sexual activity. In Zayn’s stories, negotiation of consent most frequently surrounded kissing and non-sexual behaviors. Regarding sexual consent, though, negotiations of consent before initiating sexual activity and before initiating a sex act were equal in frequencies. These observations, taken as a whole, imply that, when sex isn’t considered as a possibility, perhaps consent becomes irrelevant to the stories’ characters for all other kinds of romantic interactions.

The different ways in which sexual consent is negotiated and established also play a significant role in setting the tone for the sexual interaction. When Harry and Carter have sex for the first time in *Brother’s Best Friend*, negotiation of consent is depicted as an ongoing process throughout the scene. After, upon Carter’s suggestion, they successfully sneak past her parents to her bedroom in order to have sex, Harry pauses their kissing to ask, “Do you trust me?” Carter responds, “I’m ready, I promise.” After undressing and putting on a condom, Harry reconfirms Carter’s consent, asking “Ready?” Carter nods affirmatively. When Carter’s reaction to the beginning of vaginal intercourse suggests pain, the two reevaluate their plan of action:
“Are you okay?” He asks as he tried to keep his eyes open. He was in obvious bliss compared to what I was feeling.

"Y-Yeah," I croak, trying to sound calm, "Just hurts a little."

"You wanna... Like, roll over and be on top?” He asks softly, and before I could refuse, he says, "It'd be easier for you to adjust to the pain now rather than later."

I bite my lip and nod. It sounded reasonable. But I'm not sure if it would actually help me adjust. Then again, I was still new to this so I may as well.

Carter finds that the adjustment of position helps, and she continues to lead the sexual interaction, providing the majority of the active participation during the scene.

In other stories, when consent was negotiated less carefully, that negotiation seemed to correspond with less female active participation throughout the interaction. During a sexual interaction between Becca and Harry in The Fighter, for example, Harry begins undressing Becca when she meets him at the gym where he trains for his career as a boxer. Consent is brusquely discussed when Becca asks “‘Are we doing this? In the gym?’,’” and Harry replies, “If they leak any of the footage, I’ll sue them.” In this scene, the word count for the codes of “female active participation during sexual activity” totaled 47 words, whereas “male active participation during sexual activity” totaled 195 words.

**Hesitation or unease during kissing or sexual activity**

Another theme that was highly prevalent during kissing and sexual activity was hesitation or unease for kissing and/or sexual activity. Any situation in which a character hesitated during kissing or sexual activity or verbally or mentally expressed unease, reluctance, or uncertainty regarding kissing or sexual activity triggered the use of this code. The following graph illustrates the frequency of male and female hesitance/unease for kissing and sexual activity.
Although females were far more likely to experience hesitance/unease for kissing or sexual activity than males in stories written about Harry, this discrepancy was less prevalent across stories written about different band members. Some of the causes for males’ hesitation for kissing or sex involved female intoxication, guilt from infidelity, distaste for public displays of affection, or fear of rejection or being caught by parents. Notably, no male hesitation/unease in stories was expressed in stories about Niall. Also as expected, hesitation/unease for sex was low in band member categories that did not contain graphic descriptions of sex: Liam and Niall.

The narratives in which male hesitation/unease for kissing or sex involved female intoxication are especially revealing about the authors’ conceptualizations of sexual consent. In P.S. I Hate You, Harry briefly considers initiating a sexual interaction with his highly intoxicated romantic interest, named Blue. In Blue’s intoxicated state, the couple kisses and undresses each other, and Blue tries to verbally initiate sexual activity by “moaning” the words “touch me” in his Harry’s ear. As Harry considers her request, though, author “BritishBums” narrates his internal dialogue. Harry thinks: “Why was I taking advantage of her? I wasn't that kind of guy
though.. Yes, I know I hooked up with girls, but not without them knowing.” Subsequently, Harry tells her “Blue, I can’t tonight. You’re drunk, and I just can’t do that to you.”

Whereas Harry in *P.S. I Hate You* remembers that sober sexual consent is a requirement for sexual interaction, Zayn in *He’s No Good* evaluates sexual consent with his intoxicated girlfriend, Zoe, differently. According to Zayn, engaging in sexual activity while one partner is intoxicated is not admirable, but it is still permissible as long as the female initiates and leads the sexual interaction and the male does not force the sexual interaction. After returning home from a party, Zayn at first denies Zoe’s attempt to unbuckle his pants. However, as they begin to kiss and Zoe sexually touches him above his clothes, Zayn gives into temptation while fraught with guilt, allowing Zoe to initiate a sexual interaction. Author “MalikIsSexy” includes Zayn’s self-justification for allowing the sexual activity to proceed; Zayn thinks: “I mean I'm not really taking advantage of her if she's the one actually doing it, is it? I definitely haven't forced anything on her that's for sure. I know she might not really know what she's doing, but this way it doesn't sound just as bad does it?” Zoe proceeds to perform oral sex on Zayn, and then, after Zayn asks again “You sure?,” the two engage in vaginal intercourse. After intercourse, Zoe becomes dizzy and nauseous, requiring help to walk to the bathroom. Zayn reassures himself by thinking, “She can barely even walk as I lead her into my bathroom, which does not make me feel any less guilty of what I just did. I know I didn't quite do the right thing - even though she is my girlfriend. But I don't think I would go so far as to say that I even took advantage of her.”

The next day, Zayn apologizes to Zoe, admitting that she was “too wasted” and “it wasn’t right.” “MalikIsSexy” also included Zoe’s internal dialogue about the incident; Zoe says to herself:

I'm not gonna be all mad and dramatic about it - because I'm not, I'm just embarrassed of myself - and he seems genuinely sorry and I guess it's all my own fault anyways since I
apparently decided to go all in with the shots. Yes he maybe should have stopped, but as far as I remember I didn't really take no for an answer. It would have been different if it was my first time, but I wasn't, so I think it's alright really.

The narratives that involved female hesitance or unease for kissing or sexual activity were more numerous and complex than male causes of hesitance. Whereas personal feelings did not surface as a cause of male hesitance or unease for kissing or sex, feelings were the primary driver of hesitance or unease among females. For example, a few of the personal feelings that sparked hesitation during female kissing or active participation in sexual activity included personal feelings towards the band member in light of conflict in the relationship, conflicting feelings between sexual desire and reasons not to have sex, and the inability to think clearly or retain control of the situation while overwhelmed by emotions. Additionally, discomfort with inappropriate times and places for kissing or sex, insecurities about their own bodies, generalized anxiety, and confusion stemming from sexual inexperience all contributed to female hesitance or unease for kissing or sex, as well.

For example, in Bad Meets Good, London’s feelings of insecurity about her body cause her to experience unease for a pending sexual interaction. “zarrysupreme” writes,

Involuntarily, I clamp my legs and his hands restrict me from closing the shut.

"Relax."

I calm down but the whole idea of being exposed to him is awkward and I feel insecure by all means. I keep myself well groomed but I still feel so iffy about this. It would've been better if this was done at night with the lights off instead of in the afternoon. This is embarrassing and all but that would've at least made me feel more comfortable about myself.
The relationship between hesitance and unease for sexual activity and several of the themes mentioned above is especially striking during Thalia’s first time having sex in *Baby Doll*. First, Thalia’s hesitation to respond to Harry’s attempt to obtain consent is characterized by a feeling of being unable to think clearly while overwhelmed with emotions. Author “Wonderwall123” writes:

My pulse sped, skittish nerves causing my fingers to tremble. "Do you want this?" Harry whispered against my cheek, prompting the flush in it. The question made my head pound. My thoughts were all over the place. I wasn't in the state to return a rational answer.

"Thalia?" He inquired, fingers brushing my cheek. All I needed to do was give him an answer. Rational decisions were always hard to make when Harry was involved. The few minutes we had spent together made it very hard for me to refuse him now. I loved him, I wanted him close. That was all I knew.

I acted before my mind could process the wholeness of this situation. I returned a nod and he dipped to kiss me again.

As the sexual interaction continues to unfold, Thalia’s narration is laced with comments noting how her lack of knowledge about sex made the experience confusing and uncomfortable. I coded the following passage with “female hesitance/unease for sexual interaction,” “sexual inexperience/lack of knowledge,” and “female pain/discomfort during sex”:

My breath caught in my throat when I felt the lower region of my body lose contact with the fabric that covered it. I decided to keep my eyes shut, it seemed easier somehow. The next sensation was far from pleasant, in fact, it was somewhat excrutiating. It was so sudden, so foreign. That was when I realised what I had really gotten myself into.

"Harry..." I wailed at the sensation of our lower bodies meeting in such an intimate way.
My fingers lightly tugged at his hair. The stinging pain grew everytime I felt him move. I wasn't aware of the dynamics, how this worked. As far as I knew, it wasn't supposed to hurt. Why would people do it if it did? Something was wrong.

In the above passage, Thalia doesn’t realize exactly what behaviors she had consented to until vaginal intercourse had already begun. Her narration conveys her feelings of uneasiness, stemming from her confusion and pain; she keeps her eyes shut to make the “far from pleasant” sensations “easier somehow,” and she clearly notes that, “Something was wrong.” Thalia’s narration throughout the remainder of the sexual interaction continues to express her heightening unease for her present situation; author “Wonderwall123” writes, “I didn't want to open my eyes. I couldn't be able to handle the sight. This wasn't me.” Later, Thalia continues to describe her response to her experienced confusion as tearful: “Harry continued to push into me and at a point I felt like I was on the verge of tears. What would we achieve from these actions? What would come after this?” After the sexual interaction’s conclusion, Thalia’s narration once more reiterates her troubled and confused feelings: “The clamorous thumping of my heart filled my ears, my head pounded with conflicting thoughts. It just wasn't sinking it yet, what we had just done. What I had just done.”

Assumption of consent

In contrast to clear negotiations of consent, assumption of consent also emerged as a prevalent theme in the dataset. Male assumption of female consent (total for sexual activity and kissing/non-sexual activity) occurred 23 times in the dataset, and female assumption of male consent only occurred three times in the dataset. Male assumption for consent to kissing or non-sexual activity accounted for 13 of the assumptions of consent, and male assumption of consent during a sexual interaction occurred 10 times. Male assumption of consent tended to involve
either interpreting females’ bodies or interpreting silence or unclear confirmations as consent. Other ambiguous “cues” that males relied on in the dataset for consent for kissing and consent for sexual interaction included wordless moans, looking into the female’s eyes for a sign of consent, or simply absence of obvious resistance.

Some male assumptions of female consent represented appropriate interpretations of nonverbal cues and indicated the male’s social competence. For example, in *Motel 6*, Niall reasonably interprets the female protagonist’s blushing and smiling at him as an affirmative answer to his request to kiss her. Author “_HakunaMatata_” writes from Niall’s perspective: “”Do ya think it'd be too soon for me to kiss you?“ I asked, licking my lips. This made Avery blush even more, and by the way she smiled at me, I knew she wanted to kiss me, too. I didn’t hesitate to lean in and crash my lips into hers.”

In other stories, males’ assumption of consent relied on more ambiguous evidence. During a heated make-out session in *He’s No Good*, Zayn pauses to evaluate the female protagonists’ body language before touching her breasts over her bra. Author “MalikIsSexy” writes from Zayn’s perspective:

I let my right hand travel down to the hem of her top, putting a bit more weight on her, kissing her again. I caress the skin of her stomach, and slowly I trace my light touch upwards towards her bra. I open my eyes to see if she's freaking out. But her eyes are closed, so I keep kissing her with more and more passion. I reach up and cup one of her breasts on top of her bra, and I catch myself in softly pressing my crotch against her right knee in a slow thrust.

Soon after this passage, the couple is interrupted by Zayn’s little brother, halting the kissing before sexual activity can be is initiated. In the following chapter, the female protagonist
wonders about what would’ve happened if Zayn’s little brother hadn’t interrupted, and she responds to her friend’s inquiry about her desire to have sex with Zayn with the answer: “Well…Yeah I guess.” While her answer suggests that Zayn didn’t misinterpret her lack of “freaking out,” it still indicates a hesitance for impending sexual interaction that, if not for Zayn’s little brother, would’ve likely followed suit.

In some situations, though, the male’s assumption of consent clearly incorrect; in Bad Meets Good, “zarrysupreme” narrates the thoughts of the female protagonist, named London: “I unfolded my legs and stretched them out. They were starting to cramp up. Harry must’ve interpreted it the wrong way because he slid me down from the baseboard and hovered over me. It happened too fast that I couldn’t protest.” This incorrect assumption sparks a series events that culminates in the female’s first sex act, which begins without her consent. After forcefully sliding the London from the baseboard, Harry immediately launches into 169 words of uninterrupted and unreciprocated “dirty talk,” involving how aroused London must be in the moment, sexual actions he desires to perform, and his own current state of arousal. Upon finishing his soliloquy, Harry guides the female’s hand beneath his boxers and begins rubbing his erection, even though her “hand was stiff.” Then, he inquires about consent, asking, “Please…just do this baby.” The female nods in agreement and continues the hand job by herself.

In Dark and Dangerous Love, Zayn, cast as the vampire king of a post-apocalyptic society in the story, relies on his interpretation of females’ bodies to justify his rape of a palace maid. Author “MollyNight”’s narration clearly features the maid’s protests, but Zayn attempts to justify his actions to himself and the maid. “MollyNight” writes: “He felt her wetness through her underwear, signaling her body reacting perfectly to him. ‘Your lips say no, but your body is
saying yes,’ Zayn let out a masculine chuckle as he slowly lifted her skit[sic]…” This
disconcerting rape scene was clearly intended to contribute to Zayn’s development as an
immoral, violent, and abusive character. However, as the author continues to narrate the rape
scene, Zayn’s incorrect assumption of consent appears to gain some validity; the maid’s protests
of “Please, let me go” shift to “Please, my king, take me!,” and when Zayn asks, “Tell me, does
your husband ever make you feel this good?,” she answers “N-no.” The authors’ third-person
narration reinforces the sincerity of her shift from no consent to consent by repeating the phrase
“moans of pleasure” twice to describe the maid’s reactions. Thus, while this scene in Dark and
Dangerous Love at first appeared to correctly identify in instance where male assumption of
female sexual consent constitutes rape, the following narration obscured the story’s conceptual
clarity surrounding rape and sexual assault.

Sexual violence

The chart below describes the frequency of events in which rape, sexual assault, or
nonconsensual activity occur or are described in the story, but were clearly identified as assault.
In other words, these codes evidence a clear understanding of what constitutes nonconsensual
interactions. The code “rape/sexual assault” includes instances of rape or sexual assault that
occur within the narrative, instances of rape or assault that occurred to characters in the past, and
discussion between characters or characters’ internal reflections about rape/sexual assault. The
code “male withdraws consent” indicates that a female continued active participation in kissing
or sexual activity after a male had withdrawn consent, and the code “female withdraws consent”
describes the reverse. The codes “female initiates unwanted kiss,” “male initiates unwanted
kiss,” and “male initiates unwanted grope” are self-explanatory.
The content associated with the codes above often served as a tool for plot development. For example, in *Bad Meets Good* ("zarrysupreme"), the female protagonist named London is clearly attacked and sexually assaulted while at school. London’s relationship with her attacker is not central to the story, though; rather, the episode allows her to be saved by Harry, which marks the beginning of their romantic relationship. In *Bad meets good*, *Hero*, and *Motel 6*, the band member temporarily blames the female for the kiss and must resolve the misunderstanding to salvage the relationship. In fact, across several stories a plot turn evolves around an incident in which a male other than the band member initiates a clearly unwanted kiss with the female protagonist, wherein the band member observes or learns of the kiss, and the plot development centers around how the band member processes the information.

The entirety of *Dark and Dangerous Love* revolves around rape and sexual assault. In this story, as the vampire king of a post-apocalyptic world, Zayn abducts a young woman, Evelyn, and requires her to live at his palace in an attempt to make her fall in love with him. The
story’s plot centers around Evelyn’s resistance to his sexual advances, his sexual violence towards her, and her eventual attempts to prevent Zayn from killing her family and loved ones and to advocate for human rights by acquiescing to his desires. The sum of the codes involving sexual violence reached 28 within *Dark and Dangerous Love*.

*Unclear understanding about rape/nonconsensual activity.* In some situations or narrations of characters’ thoughts, the blame of rape, assault, or nonconsensual sex was either deflected from the perpetrator or identified as a less severe offense. Evidence of unclear understanding occurred 21 times during the dataset, all during stories written about Zayn. In *Bad meets good*, Zayn and Zoe both place a portion of the blame for the lack of sober sexual consent on Zoe for adamantly pursuing sexual interaction while intoxicated and for becoming so intoxicated in the first place. Similarly, although sexual activity does not occur while the female protagonist is intoxicated during *Aesthetics*, the female muses that if they had engaged in sex, “it wouldn’t exactly be taking advantage of me if I was willing.”

The presence of an unclear understanding of rape and sexual assault was found to be more complicated throughout *Dark and Dangerous Love*, the post-apocalyptic story about a human girl ordered to leave her home and live in the palace of vampire king, Zayn. As a violent, abusive, and manipulative ruler and lover, the narrative makes it clear that Zayn is guilty of many accounts of rape and sexual assault. However, several moments in the story complicate a straightforward presentation of rape. As described in the male assumption of female consent section, Zayn’s tactic of interpreting women’s bodies in attempt to justify rape is clearly described as rape at first. However, as the rape scene progresses, the victim’s shift in behavior seems to confirm Zayn’s interpretation of her body and undermines the level of severity for his crime that is presented to the reader. Similarly, when Evelyn reflects on the first time that Zayn
raped her, she recalls, “As much as she hated it, she climaxed, she reached the point of pleasure under his touch, something he had not been able to force her to do.” This reflection reiterates the idea that certain elements of her rape—the “pleasure” she experienced “under his touch” and her orgasm—were not a result of Zayn’s force and fall outside the construct of rape. Additionally, the language throughout the story narrowly interprets rape as forced vaginal intercourse where the victim actively attempts to stop the interaction. Thus, the numerous times that Zayn forces Evelyn to unwilling perform sex acts other than vaginal intercourse, like giving or receiving oral sex, are described as nonconsensual but not as rape. Furthermore, as the narrative progresses, Evelyn stops actively resisting Zayn’s sexual advances in order to avoid triggering his threats to kill her family and other loved ones and in order to bargain for increased rights for humans across the kingdom, many of whom are confined to lives in squalid “blood farms” to meet vampires’ need for human blood. Even though all these sexual interactions are forced through coercion, the narrative fails to explicitly identify many of them as rape or sexual assault.

In summary, while depictions of enthusiastic sexual consent and nonconsensual sexual assault were clearly differentiated within the dataset, the middle ground of the spectrum between these opposite representations of consent was often obscured by a number of different factors—including but not limited to the ability of females to soberly or knowledgeably consent to sexual behavior, interpretations of body language and bodily responses as proxies for or reaffirmations of consent, and narrow conceptualizations of rape and nonconsensual physical activity.

**Gendered behavior**

This section of the analysis focuses on the representation of females’ gender roles outside of sexual and romantic interactions. In addition to counting the frequencies of the codes used to
describe females’ experiences in these narratives, I present an analysis of three emergent themes that contextualize how patriarchal dominance is further perpetuated throughout the dataset.

The following codes emerged as the most prevalent hallmarks of feminine behavior in the dataset. The code “agnostic female behavior” was employed any time a female initiated or reclaimed control of a non-sexual situation, either verbally or by actions. The code “gender stereotype deviation” refers to any description of a female character that noted her deviance from normal gender stereotypes. The code “gender stereotype” simply refers to any description or reference to a female stereotype. “Saved by band member” indicates a situation in which a male band member saved a female from plight or danger. “Slut-shaming” refers to any time that a character derogatorily used alleged female promiscuity as an insult. Finally, “patriarchal protection of females” refers to any instance in which males expressed the need to protect females from danger or other males or to preserve female innocence or modesty. This code was also used when females relied on or expressed a dependence upon protection from males. The graph below shows how frequently these codes were seen across the dataset.

![Figure 10- Gendered behavior](image-url)
**Agentic female behavior**

Agentic female behavior included a wide range of physical and verbal actions. For example, of the 100 times the code was employed, eleven times involved a female slapping someone who treated her with disrespect or attempted to initiate unwanted kissing. Other means of violence also constituted a portion of female agentic behavior in the dataset; the codes “agentic female behavior” and “female violence” co-occurred 19 times, including other violent acts such as punching, kneeling someone in the groin or shin, stomping on someone’s foot, threatening violence, or tackling. Verbal actions constituting agentic behavior included defending oneself and friends from insults or other present dangers and defying patriarchal reliance on males.

While agentic female behavior had a relatively high frequency across all stories, it often appeared to be accompanied by high frequencies of “patriarchal protection of females” or “saved by band member,” either serving as a punishment for the female’s agentic behavior or saving her from the plight she found herself in as a result of her agentic behavior. For example, in *Hero (Liam Payne)*, female protagonist Sally spots an impending robbery on her way home from a party decides to save the woman under attack by tackling the robber and unintentionally stabbing him in the eye. This causes the large male robber to fall over and crush Sally on the ground. When he sees her immobilized on the ground, he flees the scene, presumably to avoid any connection to Sally’s injuries, which, according to Sally’s narration, might be life threatening. When she awakens in the hospital with a fractured spine and hip bone, Sally’s parents scold her for not calling the police upon witnessing the attack, belittling her agentic behavior childish. Her father says, “You’re not a child anymore, you’re 19 and should know how to behave by now.” By contrasting Sally’s agentic behaviors with how adult women “should behave,” he reinforces
the patriarchal ideal that women should not take active roles in the situations unfolding around them and should instead defer on patriarchal authority. He continues, “If you ever see something like, like what you saw last night, don’t try to stop it yourself. Call the police, whatever happens, just call the police.” Furthermore, when her friends visit her in the hospital, one of them invokes the patriarchal stereotype of females’ dependence on males for protection from sexual predators by hinting that Sally’s actions could’ve resulted in her rape. Upon explaining how she tackled the man, the following dialogue ensues:

"You what?" Carrie said quietly.
"I said, I ran and-"
"I heard you!" She hissed. "What were you thinking?!"

And then it began.
"He could have killed you!"
"Or worse, ra- ugh, attacked you!"
"You could have been lying at the mortuary or something right now!"
"All because of one damn energy drink!"
"Imagine carrying his ba-"

“Wait,” Carolyn said, shutting Briana up. "How did you... How did you end up with a screwed up body?"

Although Carolyn interrupts Briana, the suggestion is clear; she considers rape and its potential consequences, like an unwanted pregnancy, as a fate worse than being killed.

Although Louis’s love interest in Bitter & Sassy, named Kay, frequently acts agentically with little patriarchal backlash, her actions still fit within a patriarchal framework. In the story, the bitterly heartbroken Louis frequently deals with his feelings by sulking and lashing out at his
friends; in spite of their many attempts, his fellow band members can’t bring Louis out of his post-breakup funk. Throughout the narrative, Kay exhibits agency by actively confronting Louis about his behavior and almost always taking the role of initiator and leading actor in romantic and sexual interactions with Louis. However, the driving force behind Kay’s agency is her emotional intelligence, which she uses with the sole purpose of mending Louis’ broken heart. An episode involving Louis’s reaction to running into his ex-girlfriend vividly illustrates this juxtaposition. Kay finds Louis, accompanied by his body guard named Paul, burning a large heap of Starbucks cups—symbolic of his ex-girlfriend’s interests—in an outdoor fire. Paul fails to physically restrain Louis’s irate behavior and warns Kay of the present danger when she approaches the scene. When she tells Paul to leave her alone with him, he responds, “‘What?!...Are you mental? He will kill you! He was burning cups. He is not all right.” Kay bravely insists on proceeding alone, and as she approaches Louis, he literally growls at her. Louis narrates:

I growl at her, trying to scare her. “Louis, shh, it’s okay,” she says, her voice so soft I barely hear her, so I have to stop making noise. Then her hand is on my cheek, even softer than any other time. I freeze. I can’t move when she touches me like this, when she is looking at me like this. Paul releases me and I still don’t move, I don’t scream, I don’t kick, I don’t do anything.

This image of courageous female initiative is inseparable from one of feminine docility, thus preserving its position within a patriarchal organization of gender relations.

Stereotypes and stereotype deviation

Gender stereotypes and gender stereotype deviations outside of sexual interactions had relatively low frequencies, yet their presence across all stories testifies to their significance in the
representation of gender in One Direction RPF. The female behavior stereotypes invoked in this
data set included an inaptitude at sports, stubbornness, proclivity for shopping or feminine-typed
products, emotional tendencies, moody or rude behavior during menstrual periods, need for
emotional commitment from sexual partners, immaturity, housework burdens to serve husbands,
and cryptic-styled discourse depicted as confusing to men.

When females deviated from these and other normative gender stereotypes, their behavior
was often noted as unusual, although usually in a positive context that contributed to her
romantic attractiveness, i.e. “you’re not like other girls.” Thus, although these positive
interpretations of females’ deviations granted them allowance to break from those stereotyped
gender norms, the mention of the deviations ultimately sustained the existence of these
categories as pervasive and devalued. Deviations from female stereotypes in this dataset included
enjoying or consuming large amounts of food, stubbornness or the inability to be controlled,
knowledge of sports, natural beauty as opposed to beauty enhanced by make-up or other artificial
products, self-confidence as opposed to insecurity, lack of interest in trivial topics, guarded
emotions, physical strength, and high levels of sexual desire.

**Slut-shaming**

“Slut-shaming” between two females was found 27 times across the dataset; in 4 cases,
self-shaming occurred. These cases almost unanimously served as a means of downward social
comparison, noting heavy make-up, skimpy clothing, and attempts to steal the attention of a
romantic partner as grounds for slut-shaming. For example, in *Bad Meets Good*, London muses,
“I don’t understand how some girls go all the way out with makeup and tight fitting clothes. It
doesn’t look cute at all. They try so hard to impress the boys when in reality they look like trash.
It’s quite funny actually if you ask me.” Subsequently, she describes her own outfit and make-up
in detail, concluding that her look is “Hmm not so bad, not so classy and not too trashy.” Slut-shaming very rarely pertained to the number of sexual partners a female had actually had.

Males invoked slut-shaming against a female in 24 cases. However, unlike the female-to-female situations, males appeared to do so with a variety of intents. Sometimes, they employed slut-shaming in order to valorize some girls over others, especially their own romantic partners. In other instances, males used this tactic in attempts to protect a female from other males or to encourage females to stay away from other males. For example, in *He’s No Good*, a male friend of Zoe approaches Zayn prior to the start of their relationship. The friend tells Zayn, “‘She's not like the girls you use to be around, and you need to respect that she's not a toy or a slut.’” Zayn interprets this statement further, thinking “what he really is saying is - she's a virgin. Anyway I'm pretty sure she is.”

In addition to using slut-shaming as a tool for maintaining patriarchal protection of females, males also appeared to use the tactic to compensate for insecure masculinity. In *Dark and Dangerous Love*, the other royals in Zayn’s vampire court frequently slut-shame Evelyn for believing that her soul mate is her childhood sweetheart instead of Zayn and for befriending a friendly male vampire in the castle. Most of these insults praise Zayn while belittling Evelyn, attempting to compensate for Zayn’s inability to make Evelyn fall in love with him. Similarly, when Harry learns that another male kissed London in *Bad meets Good*, and he continued kissing her against his will, he accuses her of “whoring around with him behind [his] back.” Likewise, when Liam learns that another male kissed Sally against her will, he yells at her, “You *let* him kiss you, you fucking slut!”

Across the dataset, females in these narratives sometimes acted in ways that seemed to resist conformity to gender stereotypes, from practicing agentic behavior and violence to defying
gendered norms like feminine consumption of small food portions. However, the consequences of these deviations, including other characters’ responses to those behaviors, often undermined the seemingly egalitarian portrayals of gender relations. On the other hand, the more prevalent conformity to gender stereotypes throughout the narratives, from kissing and sexual initiation to active participation in sexual actions to slut-shaming to extra-sexual behaviors like eating, are evidence that straightforward sexist undertones permeated these stories and overshadowed any deviations from the norm.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

This textual analysis examined 24 of the most popular One Direction real person fiction (RPF) stories currently published on Wattpad.com, focusing on the dominant scripts for sex and romance central to these narratives. These scripts are highly gendered across several criteria. Quantitatively, males in these stories initiate and actively participate in kissing and sexual activity significantly more frequently than females. While these discrepancies are present throughout the dataset, they are greatest in stories with graphic descriptions of sexual activity, as opposed to stories that do not describe the characters’ sexual interactions in great detail and stories in which the characters do not have sex. These differences in level of sexual explicitness of the stories generally align with the branded public persona for each band member; the stories written about the charming womanizer personality (Harry Styles) and the mysterious bad boy (Zayn Malik) had the highest number of stories involving graphic descriptions involving sex, followed by stories written about the stereotypically mischievous class clown Louis Tomlinson. Stories written about down-to-earth band member who could “meet the parents,” Liam Payne, and the sweet goof ball Niall Horan contained the least amount of graphic descriptions of sex. Regarding the tendency for Harry, Zayn, and Louis’s stories, respectively, to contain higher discrepancies between males and females’ numeric representation in sexual scripts, I found one significant exception. Stories written about Niall had the largest disparity of the group between males and females initiating kissing. Although Niall’s stories refrain from sexual explicitness, they still contain a high volume of detailed descriptions of kissing. Thus, it seems that when any
physical interaction—both kissing and sexual activity—in these stories is described in great
detail, males’ actions and interests are likely to have more representation within the narrative
than females’ actions and interests.

In addition to quantity, the quality of males and females’ roles in sexual interactions
differs as well. Regarding descriptions of sexual activity, females’ sexual scripts involve more
actions that are supplementary to the sexual acts themselves, like touching their partner’s hair
and back, than males. Across both kissing and sex, the language that describes males’ behavior is
more likely to include language that resembles aggression and attack, and males are more likely
to exhibit sudden actions that surprise their partners, potentially hindering their ability to grant
consent for said actions. While these themes still apply to female characters to a lesser extent,
their presence throughout the dataset nonetheless normalizes their prevalence to romantic
experiences. Pain experienced during kissing and sexual interactions receives a similar treatment
as a regular part of females’ romantic experiences.

Negotiations of consent for both kissing and sexual activity occur regularly throughout
these stories. While the sexual scripts in these narratives prioritize consent as a necessary
element of sexual interaction, several factors oftentimes blur clear distinctions between the
presence and lack of consent. Instances in which males’ assumption of females’ consent is
accepted as a proxy for sexual consent within the narrative fail to acknowledge the questionable
reliability of males’ interpretations of females’ body language and physical reactions and
sometimes reaffirm popular rape myths of female pleasure during assault.

This dataset also conveys complex conceptualizations of females’ ability to give consent;
different authors provide conflicting interpretations of the ability to grant sexual consent while
intoxicated. In another instance, the narrative overlooks the female’s inability to give informed
consent to sex, stemming from her lack of sexual knowledge, in spite of her clearly expressed feelings of unease before, during, and after the sexual interaction. The ubiquity of females’ hesitance and unease for sexual interaction throughout the dataset also obscures the conceptual clarity of consent for kissing or sexual consent, portraying the idea that uncertainty for entering a physical or sexual interaction is a normal element of these interactions. The narrow definitions of rape and sexual assault reflected in these stories also serve to complicate straightforward understandings of sexual consent, since their preclusion of a variety of coercive and nonconsensual actions results in these actions’ categorization as forms of consent.

Finally, gendered roles outside of romantic relationships also have a significant presence throughout these stories. In particular, although females frequently display agentic behavior in these narratives, such actions are often coupled with negative consequences that require rescue by a band member or a return to patriarchal protection. Exceptions to this trend still reinforce patriarchal dominance by framing female agency in terms of emotional labor. Similarly, while female characters in the dataset often break with traditional gender stereotypes, the ways in which other characters observe these deviations reaffirms their presence and devalues feminine traits. Also, the presence of slut-shaming in the dataset directly reflects sexist ideals and narratively serves as a tool for upholding patriarchal norms.

It is outside the scope of this study to thoroughly consider the relationship between the dominant scripts in this dataset and the authors’ and consumers’ personal attitudes and values about sex and romance. A quick look at the authors’ notes in these stories clearly suggests that the relationship is not simple. Leaving brief author’s notes at the beginning and/or end of each chapter is common practice on Wattpad.com. Addressed to readers, these notes serve a variety of functions, including soliciting readers to vote for and share the story; addressing reader
comments on previous chapters; asking for feedback; providing disclaimers for sexual content, sexual abuse, and other potentially disconcerting content; and explaining narrative content or instructing readers how to interpret the content. The clear indications of a feedback loop suggest that the development of sexual and romantic scripts in the narratives could involve reader input—meaning that the scripts would not be a direct representation of authors’ intrapsychic scripts and would be interactionally constructed in part. Additionally, some authorial instructions for interpreting narrative content suggest fictional distance from the authors’ own values. For example, “MollyNight” begins *Dark and Dangerous Love*, which features Zayn as a post-apocalyptic vampire king and perpetrator of sexual assault, with the following disclaimer:

This story touches on many social, political, environmental and economical issues of our current society.

This story includes explicit scenes of violence, sex, and scenes that will make you swoon, flood with feels, and make you cry… I do not condone many of the themes of the story. But these are things that occur everyday. Just because I do not condone them, does not make reality any less cruel, the world any less corrupted. My objective is to explore different character's mindsets, make you feel what they feel, make you feel things you never knew you could feel. I tell the story through a third person's point of view. I am the narrator. I some times lean towards the opinions of the characters, but I am not the characters.

In this story, these characters do things that many of you may not like, but their actions makes them who they are. They do things not because I want them to, but because that is what they would do if they were to control their own actions…

In an authors’ note later in the story, “MollyNight” elaborates on the story’s relevance to societal
issues:

IMPORTANT: if you think DnDL [Dark and Dangerous Love] sends out a bad message, then you are wrong. Just stop telling me it sends a bad message because it doesn't. Zayn and Evelyn's relationship was inspired by our relationship with Earth. Zayn is the humans and Evelyn is Earth. I explained it on my twitter, just look through my photos, there's a 3 picture brief explanation. [sic]

Clearly, the relationship between authors’ and readers’ personal attitudes about sex and romance and the dominant sexual scripts in the One Direction RPF community on Wattpad.com is complex and should be explored in future research that interviews the authors themselves. Although not a direct proxy for authors’ intrapsychic scripts, however, the content of the scripts in these narratives is still of social significance. Particularly, the patterned repetition of nuanced mechanisms that reinforce masculine dominance—in terms of quantity of representation, masculinist language, repression of female voices and concerns, etc.—that extends throughout the dataset points to a pervasive conceptualization of gendered roles in romantic and sexual relationships as unequal among participants in the Wattpad.com One Direction RPF community. In short, although not always evident upon first read, sexism pervades these stories in ways that reinforce patriarchal norms and conceptions of sex and romance.

Also, in terms of the research studies about rape scripts detailed in the literature review, the existing dominant rape scripts in this dataset resemble attack from a stranger. Previous research has found that holding these types of rape scripts may render young women more vulnerable to sexual assault. On the other hand, holding rape scripts that resemble date rape, with elements like coercion, would increase young women’s ability to recognize key warning signs in dangerous situations and thus increase their chances of being able to escape the situation.
Turchik’s, (2009). The tendency of the narratives in this dataset to skim past existing ambiguity in negotiations of sexual consent blurs the boundaries between conceptualizations of consent and coercion in a way that perpetuates unclear scripts involving date rape—which, according to Turchik’s findings, would make women who share these sexual scripts more likely to experience sexual assault.

In spite of the problematic sexual scripts concerning rape and sexual consent prevalent in the One Direction RPF community on Wattpad.com, the website still presents a promising opportunity for shifting these scripts to emphasize clearer understandings of sexual consent, date rape, and other forms of sexual assault. Network theory of gender inequality holds that females’ social relationships involve higher levels of investment of resources like time, energy, emotional labor, etc. Thus, females tend to form fewer social relationships and build denser, more interconnected social networks than their male counterparts, whose social networks are more expansive with a larger total number of relationships. These differences in network structures create discrepancies in access to information and opportunities, resulting in differences in attainment between men and women over time. (Smith-Lovin & McPherson, 1993b). As discussed in the literature review, this discrepancy seems especially evident regarding gaps in information between teen boys and girls regarding rape scripts; previous research has found that teen boys were more likely than teen girls to hold rape scripts that resemble date rape, including elements like coercion, than teen girls (Krahé et al., 2007). However, Wattpad.com not only virtually connects adolescent girls and young women with millions of other users, but also fosters the formation of the weak relationships ties that are characteristic of males’ social networks. The structure of Wattpad.com coincides with online fan communities’ general shift from tightly-knit communities to more blogging-oriented environments that promote “networked
individualism” (Welman 2001). Although fan studies scholarship has documented fans’ dissatisfaction with the loss of highly personal relationships between fans (Jenkins, 2002), this shift encourages female participants on Wattpad.com to build extremely expansive social networks that are not inhibited by the high level of investment typically required of female relationships. Paired with the high volume of candid discussion about sex and romance on the site, Wattpad.com offers an especially compelling vehicle for expanding females’ social networks in a way that compensates for the structural disadvantages of normal female social networks, especially regarding discrepancies between teen boys and girls’ rape scripts.

Conclusion

Time and time again, One Direction fans have demonstrated their exceptional ability, initiative, and dedication to arranging and corralling support for the band members. As described in the literature review, fans engage in an impressive range of activities to support the band and the band members’ continuing individual music careers, ranging from organizing “streaming parties” and “vote attacks” to boost the Billboard rankings of their new songs to implementing guerilla marketing campaigns for new music, even hanging promotional flyers and posters around their hometowns. I have not doubt that, with enough interest and accurate information, Directioners could effectively leverage the fandom to incite a cultural shift in the discourse about sex, sexual consent, and patriarchal gender roles on Wattpad.com in a way that would have a positive impact amongst its millions of users.

The findings of this study outline the problematic sexual scripts and gendered behaviors common to One Direction RPF stories that fans should focus their attention towards changing: the lack of narrative space dedicated to female actions during kissing and sex; the supplementary language used to describe females’ participation in kissing and sexual activity; the aggressive
language used to describe males participation during kissing and sexual activity; the valorization of sudden male actions that silence females during sexual activity; normalization of female pain, hesitation, and unease during kissing and sexual activity; the tolerance of male assumption of female sexual consent; unclear understandings about rape and nonconsensual sexual activity; and the widespread prevalence of stereotypical gender roles.

In order to help fans most effectively utilize this information, future research needs to explore the ways in which authors and participants in this community interpret and interact with the sexual scripts featured in the RPF stories. Since the scripts in these stories do not necessarily reflect a direct representation of authors’ intrapsychic scripts, this knowledge and a clearer understanding of the uses and gratifications that these stories provide for Wattpad.com participants could pinpoint other locations where fan activists should also target script-changing.

Because these findings identify problematic scripts of sex and romance that are widely circulated amongst millions of young women and adolescent girls across the globe, they present useful to applications for non-fan audiences as well. For example, if interested in aiding positive social change, producers of media content for adolescent girls and young women could utilize this information to identify the prevalence of these problematic themes in their own content and adjust their content in ways that target changing the framing of these themes. Additionally, these findings could inform the development of curriculum for youth sex education by indicating what misconceptions about sexual consent and rape are widely circulated among this demographic group and should therefore be addressed in educational settings.

Recent events like the mounting numbers of male public figures who have been identified as perpetrators of sexual assault and the MeToo movement have put an international spotlight on the dangers and injustices that women face in their everyday lives. While patriarchal dominance
permeates nearly all aspects of social life, entrance to the dating scene and romantic relationships represents an especially challenging space for adolescent girls and young women to grapple with these issues. The process of dating and falling in love necessarily involves making oneself vulnerable in many respects. As evidenced in the One Direction RPF stories in this study, for adolescent girls and young women, engaging in this vulnerability often implicates rendering themselves vulnerable to being limited by gender stereotypes, male dominance, male aggression, nonconsensual sexual activity, and sexual assault. Although not a direct representation of authors’ intrapsychic scripts, these stories certainly reveal just how complicated and sometimes dangerous of an activity negotiating romantic relationships can unfortunately still be for teen girls and young women in today’s society. Idealistically, these research findings could be used in the effort to tackle rape culture and societal level patriarchal dominance. However, these institutionalized structures will certainly continue to exist as the slowly moving tides of social reform begin to incite change. In the meantime, though, if implemented effectively, the research findings from this study can be used to educate teen girls about the challenges and dangers they will likely face in the dating scene before they encounter them, equipping them with the tools to recognize and resist misogyny, patriarchal dominance, and rape culture in their own lives.


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