PORNOGRAPHY AND RAPE MYTHS IN PARANORMAL ROMANCE NOVELS

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Caudill College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

Morehead State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

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July 2012
Accepted by the faculty of the Caudill College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Science, Morehead State University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree.

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This thesis explores the implications for rape myths throughout paranormal romance novels. Radical feminism argues that power, sexuality and anger are key components in understanding rape and that media, particularly pornographic media, has sexually dehumanized women, thus creating an atmosphere in which rape is tolerated (Brownmiller 1999; Dines 2010; Dworkin 1997; Jensen 2007; Paul 2005). Using this theory, this thesis analyzes the paranormal romance novels impact on its readers and their thoughts in regards to the characters in the novels and their sexual encounters. Other research included former research on romance novels, rape myths and the effects of pornography on both men and women.

This thesis found that readers were aware of the sexual aggression in the paranormal romance novels, describing them as violent, pornographic or borderline rape. All subjects agreed that the sexual encounters were somewhat intolerable to
read and two of the subjects refuse to read the sexual encounters due to the pornographic and graphic nature of the sexual encounters.

This thesis also explores pornography and its relationship to paranormal romance novels. The research was able to provide linkages to pornography in regards to the sexual encounters between the hero and heroine, implicating pornography’s infiltration of mainstream culture. This thesis argues that pornography has created a shift in paranormal romance novels that have made them more sexually graphic and violent, eliciting a possible culture of women who are more tolerant of sexual aggression and violence.

This thesis also explores the paranormal romance novel and its implication for rape myths throughout the story. The research was able to provide linkages to rape myths through a detailed content analysis of four paranormal romance novels and interviews with five long term readers that also implicated the sexual violence associated with paranormal romance novels.

Accepted by: 

[Signatures]
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people that have helped me complete this thesis.

Dr. Bernadette Barton for the many times that she read and reread the many different components of my thesis as I emailed them to her or dropped them off at her office. She offered many great suggestions and helped me focus and narrow down exactly what I was looking for. She was always available and always willing to help point me in the right direction.

Drs. Shondra Nash and Constance Hardesty who were also members of my thesis committee. They willingly stepped in to assess my thesis and offered great suggestions.

My husband, Trevor Dennis, who has suffered through this thesis with me, offering me valuable time to work on my thesis and understanding my anguish and fear at the prospect of never completing the work.

My mother, Joan Becraft, who has supported me throughout every endeavor in my life and has always offered a listening ear.

Larissa Reynolds, a long time friend, who was able to provide me with guidance and willing participants when I felt that I had exhausted every outlet possible.

And lastly, all the paranormal romance novel readers who were willing to talk with me about their thoughts and feelings over the novels they had read.
Introduction

In 2005, over fifty percent of paper book sales were romance novels and in 2004 romance novels made 1.2 billion dollars in sales (Wu 2006). According to the Romance Writers of America website, in 2010 sales of romance novels increased to 1.38 billion dollars annually and the average reader is between the ages of 31-49, with a mean of 44.6. Romance novels account for 13.4% of all book sales, beating out many other genres. Approximately 64.6 million people claimed to have read at least one romance novel in a year with 80% of those readers being women (Wu 2006). According to the Harlequin website, a prominent publisher of romance novels, there are at least seventeen subcategories for romance novels. These categories range from historical romance to inspirational to suspense, mystery and paranormal romance (eharlequin.com). With the increasing sales of romance novels, particularly paranormal romance novels, it is imperative that we better understand the cultural effects of these novels.

I am particularly interested in paranormal romance novels because I have been a fan for many years. Recently I began to notice themes in this genre that strike me as violent and sexist (particularly the sexual encounters between the hero and heroine), similar to pornography and that imply an underlying acceptance of rape myths. Rape myths are false beliefs about sexual assault that blame the victim, for example, a victim that is intoxicated or has used drugs cannot be raped or all women secretly wish to be raped (Hamlin 2005; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1984; McMahon 2010; Reddington and Kreisel 2005). This research was able to provide linkages
between pornography and paranormal romance novels, linkages to rape myths and paranormal romance novels and readers who were aware and able to determine the graphic and sexually aggressive nature of the sexual relationship between the hero and heroine.

Paranormal romances are a sub-genre of romance novels. This thesis entails a content analysis of four paranormal romance novels. The first one is *Twilight Memories* by Maggie Shayne, published in 1995. The second one is *Burning Wild* by Christine Feehan, published in 2009. The third novel is *The Darkest Night* by Gena Showalter, published in 2008 and the last one is *Winter Born* by Sherrilyn Kenyon, published in 2004. These novels were chosen based on their paranormal element, the time of publishing difference to determine how the writing style has changed and the fact that all four authors are mainly paranormal authors whom have written best-sellers.

Paranormal romance novels are published by a variety of companies, including Harlequin, The Berkley Publishing Group, St. Martin’s and Kensington Publishing Corp., and branch from teen paranormal to adult paranormal. “Take a walk with the unknown and experience irresistible supernatural stories” reads the subheading after one selects the subgenre of paranormal romance on the Harlequin website. The website includes several selections of paranormal romance novels to choose from. The paranormal genre is a growing field in romance novels. It is impossible to shop at Wal-Mart without seeing at least five to ten novels specifically of this genre. One local bookstore has an entire section in the store dedicated to
In a paranormal romance, supernatural activity is central to the plot of the love story. In some instances relationships develop between a human and a witch, or a vampire or werewolf. Paranormal romance features stories of vampires and werewolves, with a current movement towards including other elements of the supernatural world such as witches, mermaids, demons or even angels. According to Sandra Booth's (1997) “Paradox in Popular Romances of the 1990’s,” the paranormal romance resembles the historical romance. The paranormal romance novel of the 1990’s featured a monster (or monster like qualities) in the hero that the heroine is responsible for redeeming just like is found in historical romance novels. This is consistent with Janice Radway’s (1984) findings featured in her book Reading the Romance that indicate that readers of historical romance novels find that the heroine redeems the hero by making him a better man. Similarly, Gwenda Bond’s (2009) “When Love is Strange” explores paranormal romance as a romance that is defined by supernatural elements. In a romance novel, the relationship between the hero and the heroine is the most important element of the story and they must end up happily ever after at the end of the tale. According to Sarah Robbins (2007: 26) article “Textually Promiscuous: Romance Readers Definitely Read Around,” paranormal romance sales “have never been hotter.” The world of paranormal romance novels allows authors to blend sub-genres

I started reading romance novels when I was eleven years old. I found the women in the stories powerful and compelling, strong and sophisticated. I wanted to
find the passion and love that they had found with my own soul-mate or Prince Charming. The first paranormal romance novel that I ever read was *Twilight Memories* by Maggie Shayne (1994). This book changed the world of romance forever for me because no longer were the characters humans illustrating some sense of normalcy, now they were vampires or werewolves, mythical creatures that could change shapes, read minds and wield even more power and control than conventional heroes and heroines. Crossing these boundaries stretched creativity but also, strangely, I found that these stories seemed even more sexist than traditional romance novels. As I got older, I began to notice that paranormal romance novels perpetuated sexist ideologies and rape myths similar to pornography. Because of the monster like qualities of the hero, it was almost like there was an excuse for the heroes to behave in an even more demeaning and chauvinistic manner to the heroine.

In paranormal romance novels, I find that the heroines become captives of the heroes, not only physically but emotionally as well. The sexual encounters are more graphic than traditional romance novels, and I argue, propagate rape myths such as: a good girl cannot be raped, rape is sex, women incite men to rape, women fantasize about being raped and women are available for men’s sexual desires at all times. All of these myths are strong components of pornography (Paul 2005). I once found a true romantic story between strong female and male characters, equal in career and sexuality and then paranormal romance novels constructed females as either virginal or a victim of sexual assault (Bailie 2011) changing the sexual equality between the hero and heroine. If she were sexually liberated, her sexuality is often discussed
frequently in the novel, particularly by the hero as he is often jealous of her former lovers and she could be considered promiscuous. Radway (1984) found that readers wanted a virgin heroine and if she were not a virgin, she deserved what happened to her. The heroine is almost always demure and subordinate to the hero in the stories. She rarely questions the hero’s authority and submits to his sexual demands. An example of this can be found in Christine Feehan’s (2009) *Burning Wild* when the male character has the heroine come upstairs to his office. He ties her up and leaves her naked on his desk while he works. She is not allowed to speak and must do as he asks. Secondary female characters are called sluts and whores, only looking to obtain money from the hero, using their sexual prowess in order to do so. The male characters demand that the heroine be virginal, as in one of the series by Christine Feehan where the hero asks if anyone else has ever touched the heroine, demanding that no one ever had.

I argue that the intercourse is often depicted as violent. The male overpowers the woman, no matter her resistance. Eventually she melts in to what is considered her desire and allows the passion she feels to consume her. She is willing to do anything that the male asks of her, much like is seen in pornographic films.

The heroine is beautiful, most often with long hair and legs. Her breasts are described as perfect, her lips as kissable. She is described as beautiful and thin. It is rare to read a story when the female character could be considered to constitute the average size woman and when she is, her weight is mentioned quite often in the story. In some novels the heroine was once larger and now struggles to maintain an ideal
body type. An example of this can be found in Nora Roberts (2007) *Blood Brothers* in which the heroine is on a strict diet and talks frequently about what she eats.

Nina Philadelphoff-Puren (2005) argues in “Contextualising Consent: The Problem of Rape and Romance” that the mixture of seduction and aggression in romance novels affects the legal representations of rape as they are supportive of rape myths and read mostly by women. Romance novels perpetuate the myth that when women say no, they really mean yes. This is still used as a legal argument in rape cases. Consent is subject to “double deployment” (Puren-Philadephoff 2005: 33) through the liberal treatment of the law and the liberal treatment of romance. Romance novels that exploit women’s sexuality and demonstrate violent sexual relations between the hero and heroine reinforce the argument that women “ask for it” as women are the largest group of readers of the romance genre. The same issue can be found in pornography. I was disturbed by what I was reading. I began to wonder if other readers perceived the sexist messages that I was seeing.

**Research Question**

This study, one, explores the graphic and violent language used in adult paranormal romance novels and two, how readers interpret the sexually explicit material. I am particularly interested in the linkages between these scenes and those found in mainstream pornography in light of patriarchal rape myths. To accomplish this, I performed a feminist content analysis of four paranormal romance novels and conducted in-depth interviews with five subjects to explore how sexual violence is embedded in this new genre. The content analysis included counting the number of
references to 14 categories of dimensions of violence including acts or threats of violence and predatory, jealous behavior (see Appendix 1 for a full listing of these categories). The interview subjects were asked about their reading habits, what particular authors interested them the most, if they felt the hero and heroine are representative of real-life men and women and their thoughts about the sexual encounters between the characters.
Chapter I

Radical Feminist Theory

The second wave of radical feminism emerged during the 1960's. Radical feminists argue that the "personal is political" (Friedman, Meyelerkamp and Posel, 1987: 8). As romance novels often exemplify patriarchal values, it can be argued, using the radical feminist perspective, that romance novels illustrate that the "personal is political." Radical feminists believe women must be free to safely express themselves sexually without fear of criticism and rape. This seems to be an impossible feat in a society dominated by male values, in which a woman who explores her sexuality is considered a slut or loose, or if she is raped, deserves to be because of her promiscuity, whereas men who have several sexual partners are applauded for their behavior. Radical feminists argue that women must stop being viewed as sexual slaves or outlets for men's sexual desires (Friedman, et. Al 1987). Patriarchal ideologies can be found not only in romance novels, but in pornography as well (Dines 2010; Jensen 2007; Paul 2005).

To understand the realm of paranormal romance novels and their implications towards rape myths, a comparison to pornography is valuable. Pornography has infiltrated much of mainstream culture through commercials, music videos and paranormal romance novels, and contributes to misogyny and rape myths. Similar to the increasingly violent depictions in pornography (Dines 2010; Jensen 2007), the intimacy between the hero and the heroine in paranormal romance novels has also grown more graphic and violent, illuminating an ideology that violence is attractive
and that women cannot be raped (Booth 1997; Hazen 1983; Leavenworth 2009).

The women in pornographic films typically have large breasts and small waists. Their make-up is always in place and their fingernails are perfectly manicured, typical of the type of heroines that are found in paranormal romance novels. They have no dimples, no cellulite and are typically the epitome of perfection, unless the porn film is made for a particular fetish (Dines 2010).

Pornography is defined as "writings, pictures, etc. intended to arouse sexual desire" (Webster 501). Each year 13,000 pornography films are released, 900 million are rented and there are approximately 420 million porn sites available on the web (The Price of Pleasure 2008). Dangerous Relationships by Diana E H Russell (1998:3) defines pornography as "material that combines sex and/or the exposure of genitals with abuse or degradation in a manner that appears to endorse, condone, or encourage such behavior." Pornography is usually depicted as either soft-core/erotic, hardcore non-violent and hardcore violent.

According to Susan Brownmiller (1999) "The Pornography Wars," the fight against pornography began during the 1970’s. As the second wave of the women’s movement began, the billion-dollar industry began to rise as well. Pornography was viewed as harmless to its viewers by a 1970 presidential commission, however, radical feminists did not view pornography this way. They argued that so long as the society that people lived in was a patriarchal society, there was no possible way for women to receive equal and fair sexual treatment. Under pornography, men and
women alike, are unable to find their true sexual identity. Men learn about sex from pornography, desiring to reenact the scenes that they see in the films. Often these reenactments include assaulting women or just fucking her. I speculate that women, who began reading romance novels at an early age and read about the sexual experiences from these stories, might tolerate brutish and possessive behavior from their partners.

Brownmiller (1999) argues that pornography was a way to control and suppress the women’s movement. Brownmiller (1999:296) writes that “a significant part of porn’s appeal was its promise to reveal the ancient mysteries of sex, and its newer updates, to a threatened, confused audience at a moment when traditional masculinity was undergoing its most serious challenge.” Brownmiller (1999) argued that pornography was working to undo everything that the women’s liberation had worked to accomplish.

Radical feminists have long critiqued pornography (Brownmiller 1999; Dines 2010; Dworkin 1997; Jensen 2007; Paul 2005) arguing that pornography has harmful effects on society and women. Research on romance novels by feminists also explores how romance novels reinforce patriarchal ideologies and can be harmful to its readers (Radway 1984; Hazen 1983; Hassencahl 1980; Light 1984; Philadephoff-Puren 2005). However, I have found no research exploring the similarities of the sex scenes in romance novels to those in pornographic films.

According to Andrea Dworkin (1997:89) “Life and Death” “pornography is
the orchestrated destruction of women’s bodies and souls; rape, battery, incest, and
prostitution animate it; dehumanization and sadism characterize it; it is war on
women, serial assaults on dignity, identity and human worth; it is tyranny.” Although
romance novels are written specifically for women to read as they are the majority of
its readers, the manner in which the sexual content of the novels is presented is
eroticized in ways that perpetuate patriarchal ideas about women’s sexuality. Women
are vessels for men to please themselves with and pornography and romance novels
reiterate this through their violent sexual content. While pornography contributes to a
to a rape culture where men feel free to rape women (Dines 2010; Jensen 2007; Paul
2005), like Helen Hazen (1983) in *Endless rapture: rape, romance and the female
imagination*, I argue that romance novels potentially create a culture where women
feel men are free to rape.

There is some argument that pornography can be sexually liberating for
women. Nina Hartley (1997), a current sex worker, wrote in “In the Flesh” that the
porn industry was sexually liberating for her. The decision to begin in the porn
industry was not something taken lightly by Hartley as she wanted to be able to
explore her hetero- and bisexuality, while her liberal feminist upbringing made her
question the industry. However, she did find that her life was “richer and more
rewarding for having chosen a sexually oriented occupation” (Hartley 1997: 58). She
began to direct, write and star in her own films. Women like Nina Hartley feel that if
they are going to be sexualized, they are least going to be a part of the process and
have some control over their own sexuality. Hartley (1997:58) experienced many
positive experiences with pornography such as "enhanced self-image, sexual variety, creating a platform for my ideas about sex and society, creating erotic expression, fantasy fulfillment, and economic gain."

Although women are permitted to engage in sexual acts in porn films or magazines, pornography is typically male-centered, it is made by men for men; women are subordinate and eager to please the male characters in the film or magazine. In The Girl Next Door, DVD, (2005) a film documentary about Stacy Valentine, adult film actress, it is nearly impossible to see all the benefits of the porn industry that Hartley argues were positive experiences for her. Valentine appears to suffer from extreme low-self esteem as she continues to rebuild her body over and over through plastic surgery. She has difficulty maintaining romantic relationships and struggles with isolation. As seen with Valentine there are a variety of negative consequences when women enter pornography. Hartley (1997:58) also finds very real negative consequences such as "social and familial repercussions joining a stigmatized segment of the population; the temptation to spend money as fast as it comes in; exposure to the seamier side of life (the entertainment industry is notoriously brutish); and the difficulty in creating or maintaining intimate, romantic relationships." Even Valentine (2005) states that she would not encourage other women to enter the industry.
Chapter II

Critical Review of the Literature

Pornography and Rape Myths

There has been significant research on media effects related to pornography and violence. Barrie Gunter’s (2007) article “Media Violence: Is There a Case for Causality?” looks at the connection between violence in the media and violence in individuals. Gunter suggests that there are some who are more susceptible to the effects of media violence than others. Pamela Paul’s (2005) Pornified explores the world of pornography and the effects that pornography has on family relationships, male and female viewers and children. According to Paul, pornography has extensive effects on male viewers and their reactions to women outside of pornography. Paul also looks at society and how the mainstreaming of porn has led women to feel that they are not satisfactory to their partner in the way they look and the way they participate in sexual acts. Gail Dines’ (2010) Pornland also explores pornography as destructive to viewers as it harms their personal relationships. Dines also looks at how pornography has moved into mainstream culture making it impossible to live outside the porn world. Dines analyzes writings of viewers and pornographic clips in order to understand the implications that porn has on the viewers and those involved in the industry.

Dano Demare, Hilary M. Lips and John Briere (1993) “Sexually Violent Pornography, Anti-Women Attitudes and Sexual Aggression: A Structural Equation Model” used information from male university students to look at attitudes that they
had towards women after viewing pornography. They used the Anti-Women Attitudes and Sexually Violent Pornography and Likelihood of Rape and Likelihood of using Sexual Force. They also used non-violent pornography to determine if there was a difference in viewing non-violent pornography and violent pornography. The research found that pornography and violence intermingled can result in sexual aggression.

*Striptease Culture* by Brian McNaire (2002) also discusses the negative connotations for sexualizing the culture. Women become an accessory for men and sexualizing became part of mainstream culture. McNaire also argues that sex in pornography has had to step out of regular sex, including more violence and domination, to still be enticing to users. *The Price of Pleasure*, DVD (2008), looks at the pornographic world illustrating examples of pornography, interviews individuals who have participated in pornographic films and those who have done research on pornography. The *Price of Pleasure* (2008) argues that porn is degrading to women and that although many women who are pro-porn feel that they are essentially in power of their own sexuality, they are truly not because the porn industry is run by men for men.

"Women’s Evaluations of and Affective Reaction to Mainstream Violent Pornography, Nonviolent Pornography and Erotica" by Charlene Y. Senn and H. Lorraine Radtke (1990), explores women’s reactions to pornography. Subjects were provided with pornographic images and two books, all containing heterosexual contact. This research is pertinent because it correlates rape myth acceptance and
women's reaction to violent pornography. When the subjects were exposed to violent pornography they were less empathetic towards the rape victim and were more likely to believe in the rape myths, however, when they were shown non-violent images, they were less likely to accept the rape myths. Most research done on the affects of pornography is tested against male subjects. This research, although dated, shows that women are also affected when viewing violent pornography. Research that is now done on pornography and its affects looks at how harmful pornography is to society (Dines 2010; Jensen 2007; Paul 2005; Russell 1998).

In “Sexual Assault: the victims, the perpetuators and the criminal justice system” Frances P. Reddington and Betsy W. Kreisel (2005), identify a variety of rape myths. These include:

1. The majority of rape claims are false. If a woman cries rape after she has consented to sex, she is only trying to maintain her chastity.
2. Rape only happens to bad women. A woman who portrays herself as sexually promiscuous by dressing or acting a specific way, deserved to be raped.
3. The majority of rapes are committed by strangers. (In reality, most victims know their rapist.)
4. Rape is a black-on-white crime. Indicating a racist culture, this rape myth suggests only black men rape white women.
5. Women secretly wish to be raped. People may believe that all women fantasize about being forced into sex, as propagated by mainstream pornography.
6. When a woman says “no” she really means “yes”.

7. Rapists are mentally ill.

8. Men cannot be victims of rape.

9. Rape is limited to human interaction.

According to the University of Minnesota Duluth Sociology of Rape, John Hamlin (http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/jhamlin/3925/myths.html, 2005) cites other rape myths including:

1. Rape is sex.

2. Women incite men to rape.

3. There is a “right way” to respond to a rape situation.

4. A victim should just forget the rape.

5. Rapists are lower class and criminal types.

6. Incest is rare.

7. Rape is rare and affects very few people.

8. You can tell a rapist by the way they look.

9. A man cannot rape his wife.

10. Rape occurs at night and outside.

11. Rape is a spontaneous act.

12. Rape only occurs between strangers.

13. No one can be raped against their will. They could prevent the rape if they really wanted to.

14. If the assailant, victim or both are drunk, the assailant can’t be charged with
rape.

15. If victim doesn’t fight back they weren’t raped.

16. Gang rape is rare.

Other research, such as *Rape Myths: A Review*, by Kimberly Lonsway and Louise Fitzgerald (1994) explained rape myths as attitudes and beliefs that are false, but are widely accepted, making sexual aggression against women more acceptable. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) researched studies that have been done to explore if men and women became more tolerant of rape myths if the sexual aggression was presented in a romanticized fashion (for example, in paranormal romance novels) or for arousal. These studies found that both men and women became more accepting of rape myths in these instances. They also argue that these studies are imperative in understanding how women rationalize and endure sexual aggression when they become victims themselves.

In “Rape Myth Beliefs and Bystander Attitudes among Incoming College Students,” Sarah McMahon (2010) defines rape myths as the victim asking for it or because men are unable to control their sexual urges, because she was dressed a certain way, flirted in a certain manner or alcohol was involved. McMahon (2010) also found that people who were educated about rape in high school still held these beliefs even though they were more sympathetic towards the victim. It was also found that men were more likely to believe in rape myths as opposed to women.

**Romance Novels**

Research on romance novels has mostly been done on historical romance
nourls. Janice Radway’s (1984) *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature* explores the realm of historical romance readers. According to Radway (1984), historical romance novels typically have a rape scene in the beginning of the book. The heroine is raped by the hero of the story and he spends the rest of the story attempting to reconcile the relationship. The heroine’s role in the story is to make the hero a noble and a good man as the heroine is pure and innocent.

According to romance readers that Radway (1984) interviewed, the sex scenes must be sensual and romantic, causing the pulse to race. They do not like scenes in which the man is too brutal or aggressive. Radway (1984) also found that many of her readers are able to tolerate a rape scene in a romance novel if the man confuses the woman for a prostitute or loose woman. The readers believe that if a woman doesn’t want to be raped then her sexuality should be constrained by dressing appropriately, being a virgin or talking appropriately to the hero.

New research on modern romance novel genres, such as the paranormal, has been done by Sandra Booth (1997), Helen Hazen (1983) and Marie Lindgren Leavenworth (2009). Sandra Booth’s (1997) “Paradox in Popular Romances of the 1990’s” argues that paranormal romance resemble the traditional element of the historical romance model. The monster-like and aggressive tendencies that are now found in the hero in the paranormal romance novel are used to accommodate for the stronger female character. Authors have attempted to make a stronger, more independent heroine since the women’s movement and must now have a stronger and even more aggressive hero due to patriarchal views, reinforcing traditional gender
roles. It also helps excuse rape in romance novels. The hero can use his paranormal attributes to explain why he is so violent and sexually aggressive. Fran Hassencahl's (1980:7) "Persecutors, Victims and Rescuers in Harlequin Romances" breaks down the romance novel into three main roles portrayed by the characters: the persecutors, victims and rescuers; and are imperative to the flow of the story. The persecutor is "overly critical and often sets and enforces the rules of social interaction." The rescuer is defined as someone who "plays a parental role, helping others, often sacrificing time and resources, with the only reward being a feeling of superiority over the victim" (Hassencahl 1980:7). The victim is "powerless and often responds with passivity or cries of despondency or tears of frustration and anger" (Hassencahl 1980:5). In paranormal romance novels the question remains, does the hero play both the persecutor and the rescuer?

The violent association of sex in romance desensitizes readers to violence in the real world. Reading stories where sex and aggression comingle makes it difficult to associate with a victim of sexual assault, or to reject rape myths. Helen Hazen (1983), author of *Endless rapture: rape, romance and the female imagination*, argues that the mistreatment of the heroine by the hero in romance novels is the story. Nina Philadelphoff-Puren (2005:32), "Contextualising Consent: The Problem of Rape and Romance" defines romance as a blur between aggression and seduction with heroes who tend to be "overbearing, violent and able to execute his intentions, while the heroine is passive, divided and dissimulating." In "Lover Revamped: Sexualities and Romance in the Black Dagger Brotherhood and Slash Fan Fiction" Maria Lindgren
Leavenworth (2009), looks closely at novels written by J.R. Ward. Leavenworth (2009) discusses the paranormal aspects of the romance novels and how sexuality is portrayed in the stories. The sexual nature between the characters is based on biting and blood sharing.

Romantic fiction incurs these ideas as “loves tames and transforms the beast” (Kennedy, Lubeslka and Walsh 1993:43). Kennedy, Lubeslka and Walsh (1993) argue that in romantic fiction, a woman is raped because the man cannot contain his lust for her, possibly leading readers to believe that rape is truly in the power of the woman over the man. Love therefore creates subordination.

Similarly, according to Alison Light (1984) in “Returning to Manderley” romance novels create an oppressive ideology that keep women sexually and socially subordinate to their male counterparts. Women are defined by their sexual status. They are mothers, wives, whores or virgins. “Romance offers us relationships impossibly harmonized: it uses unequal heterosexuality as a dream of equality and gives women uncomplicated access to a subjectivity which is unified and coherent and still operating within the field of pleasure” (Light 1984:391).

Romance novels also teach patriarchal roles, repressing the sexuality of the heroines in the stories. “Out of Wedlock” by Jade McKay and Elizabeth Parsons (2009), indicates that romance novels train women for marriage through self-sacrifice and fidelity. A marriage proposal or the announcing of the hero’s feelings indicates the end of the story. Women may not always be virginal in the story, but when she meets the hero, he teaches her all about her sexuality.
Julia T. Wood (2011) discusses the implications that romance novels have for adult relationships for women. In “The Normalization of Violence in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships: Women’s Narrative of Love and Violence,” Wood (2011) argues that individuals use fairy tales to make sense of themselves. For young girls, stories typically begin with a Prince Charming and a young girl or Princess who has been abducted by an evil queen. The Prince Charming comes to the rescue and all is right in the world. Many young girls trade fairy tales for romance fiction as they age. “The romance narrative portrays women as needing to be rescued by men, and, further, as needing men to be complete and fulfilled” (Light 2011:242). According to Wood, when Prince Charming is not charming, women have difficulty fitting their personal experience in to the themes offered by their culture.

Wood also discusses what she calls the “Dark Romance.” The males in the dark romance are typically controlling and violent at times. These heroes are what can be typically found in paranormal romance novels. In the Dark Series by Christine Feehan (2005-2010), the characters have what are called lifemates and the heroine is the light to the hero’s darkness. The two characters can be with no one else and if one partner dies, the other does as well. Due to the limited amount of lifemates in the world, the male characters will force the female characters to participate in the bonding experience, using their power to control the heroine’s mind. This is an excellent example of what could be construed as a dark romance as defined by Wood. The male character’s behavior is rationalized as only doing what is in the best interest of both partners, and that the women will come to love them eventually, creating
tolerance for the controlling and manipulative behavior of the hero.

Scholarly research implicates rape myths in paranormal romance novels (Hazen 1983; Philadephoff-Puren 2005) and it illustrates the similarities between historical romance novels and paranormal romance novels (Booth 1997; Radway 1984). Previous work has neglected the readers of paranormal romance novels. This study explores rape myths in romance novels, the similarities between pornography and paranormal romance novels, and the insights of readers of paranormal romance novels.
Chapter III
Methodology

To best explore the effects of the paranormal romance genre on readers, I interviewed five long term readers (long-term is defined as five or more years) of adult paranormal romance novels. Readers were asked questions in order to understand what values they perceive while reading paranormal romance novels. I also conducted a content analysis of 4 adult paranormal romance novels looking for key indicators of rape myths and the similarities to visual pornography. Adult oriented paranormal romance novels were used due to their more graphic sexual encounters between the hero and heroine. Teen novels are a separate genre and often not descriptive in the sexual encounter. The content analysis focused on indicators of four specific rape myths: 1. Rape only happens to bad women; 2. Women secretly wish to be raped 3. When a woman says no she really means yes and 4. Women are always willing and available for sexual intercourse. It also looks for indicators of other rape myths and power distribution between the hero and heroine. The content analysis explores instances when there is violence or threats of violence by the hero to the heroine; violence or threats of violence against a secondary male character in the story if he makes a sexual advance toward the heroine; sexual abuse of the heroine, her sexual activity and the reaction from other characters, particularly the hero of her sexual activity; the number of references to rape made in the novels; use of violence during sexual intercourse; and any similarities to mainstream pornography, such as outside ejaculation, sexual subordination, the words used to describe the sexual act
and aggressive tendencies towards the female participant. The content analysis includes a feminist analysis of four paranormal romance novels. I have chosen novels from popular authors. I have looked for key indicators of rape myths and the similarities to pornography including the way the heroines are physically described in the story, her sexual history and her willingness to allow the hero to dominate her sexually. Again due to the limited amount of romance novels I have chosen, the results can be cannot be generalized to all paranormal romance novels unless further research is conducted.

I also viewed three short pornographic clips from redtube.com in order to draw a comparison to the sexual encounters between the pornographic films and the paranormal romance novels. I viewed the top-rated clips of the day on the website, looking for key words and similar actions to those that can be found in paranormal romance novels. The clips lasted anywhere from six minutes to thirty three minutes. All clips involved heterosexual contact with one clip also involving lesbian contact.

Interview Subjects

I interviewed white, heterosexual women between the ages 30 to 50. All subjects resided in the Eastern Kentucky region and all but one was in a relationship at the time of the interview. The subjects read paranormal romance novels as well as other types of novels. They began reading romance novels in their teens, some as early as eleven years old. All of the subjects but one had attended some college, whereas she had obtained a high school diploma. All of the subjects had begun reading the traditional Harlequin romance novels and were able to offer a comparison
between the traditional romance novels and paranormal romance novels. Two of the
subjects read anywhere from 300-400 novels per year and the other three read from 5-
6 per year, however, when they were younger did read as many novels as the other
two subjects, but were now limited by time and other priorities. All subjects were
employed and read in their spare time.

Subjects were recruited through a snowball sample using Facebook I sent
messages to my female acquaintances in hopes that they knew individuals that have
read paranormal romance novels and who are willing to talk about their thoughts on
reading paranormal romance novels. I also posted flyers on campus and at
CoffeeTree Books, asking for participation in the study. Subjects were asked a
variety of open ended questions about on romance novels they have read; what
authors they generally read; what values they have found present in the texts and their
own assessments of the sexual encounters between the hero and heroine.

I protected the anonymity of the subjects in the study by changing their names
and leaving out pertinent details that could lead back to the subject. Subjects also
signed a voluntary consent form before beginning the project. All participation in the
study was voluntary and subjects were free to leave at any time during the research.

My interviews consisted of open ended questions that led to a more thorough
understanding of the cultural values that readers develop based on their experience
with romance novels. Due to the size of the sample and the way the sample was
gathered, any information gathered from the interviews cannot be generalized to the
population.
Interview Questions

1. How old are you?

2. What is your highest form of education?

3. Are you currently in a relationship? Please explain your relationship.

4. When did you begin reading romance novels?

5. What specific genre of romance do you read? One or several different styles?

6. What authors do you read? Who are your favorites?

7. What paranormal theme is your favorite? For example, vampires, werewolves, demons, etc.

8. Do you read other novels besides romance?

9. How were you introduced to romance novels?

10. How many novels do you think you read per year?

11. What are the characters like in the stories you’ve read?

12. Do you identify with the characters in the stories you read?

13. What do you think of the female characters in the romance novels?

14. What do you think of the male characters in the romance novels?

15. How do the novels compare to your own relationships?

16. How closely do the romance novels reflect real life?

17. Why do you like them?

18. What do you dislike about them?

19. Please describe your thoughts toward the sexual encounters featured in the novels?
20. Define what feminism means to you?

21. Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not?
Chapter IV

Pornography

Pornography has permeated much of mainstream culture. Its effects can be seen in magazine ads, television ads, movies and most recently, romance novels. While sexuality and exploration of sexuality is important, the way in which pornography portrays sexuality and exploration of sexuality is often demeaning and dehumanizing to the participants, particularly the women involved (Dines 2010). According to Robert Jensen (2007:64) *Pornography and the End of Masculinity*, women are often portrayed as “three holes and two hands.” Pornography teaches men that all women want sex all the time from all men, women like sexual acts that they perform that men demand and finally with a just a little foreplay or push, women will do anything willingly (Dines 2010; Jensen 2007; Paul 2005). Paranormal romance novels may also be teaching women the same things, because the willingness and availability of women in the romance novels parallels that of the pornographic world. The sexual aggression is also romanticized in paranormal romance novels and because of this women are more likely to believe rape myths (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994).

In order to complete an analysis of pornography and paranormal romance novels, I viewed pornographic films and looked for similarities to paranormal romance novels. In order to do so, I found redtube.com which is a pornographic website featuring a variety of pornographic films. Redtube.com offers the viewer the chance to look at the top rated films, most viewed, most favored and the newest. It
has an abundance of advertisements on the page, eliciting free sex chat, penile enlargement or links to other pornographic websites such as Extreme Hardcore Porn with flashing images of women with whore written across their foreheads, or semen splattered across their face. The viewer may also choose from whatever fetish they desire such as “Big Tits” or “Blonde,” “Teen” “Lesbian” “Bondage” and etc. I choose to view three of the top rated clips.

The first film clip I watched was “Manuel gets five babysitters for his birthday.” The clip was 24:49 minutes in length and involves an orgy with five women, who appear to be dressed as baby-sitters, and one man. There isn’t much time for talking in the clip as the women are eagerly waiting the male counterpart’s turn at them. The girls appear eager and almost frantic to have the male and the other females as well. “Manuel” penetrates each woman, removing his penis from one woman, shoving her to the side and quickly placing another one on to his penis. He may perform oral sex on the women, but they also perform oral sex on him. At one point, he is penetrating a woman and has another woman’s face close to her vagina. He then takes his penis back and forth between the woman’s vagina and the woman’s mouth. He also smacks the women on the buttocks during intercourse and her buttocks are extremely red. At one point, it is also quite obvious how red her vaginal lips are.

“Manuel” is aggressive in his actions, smacking the women on the buttocks, encouraging the other women to smack each other on the buttocks, choking the women, pushing them down and pulling their hair. At the end of the scene all five
women are lined up on the floor on their knees. “Manuel” masturbates until he ejaculates on the first woman’s face and then she circulates that semen on to the next woman. This continues to the last woman.

This type of scene can be found in paranormal romance novels. For example, the Gena Showalter’s (2011) series, several of the male characters are visiting another male character that has several women at his home. The women are splashing and playing about in the pool, begging each of the men to have their way with them.

I argue that the heroine in the paranormal romance novels learn about their sexuality through their male counterparts. They are not really exploring their sexuality but what the hero desires from them. Helen Bailie (2011) in “Blood Ties: The Vampire Lover in the Popular Romance” also seemed to find this. Bailie states that under the hero’s guidance the heroine is able to discover her sexuality. In turn, the men, the heroes, are often displayed as arrogant, stubborn and with sexual desires similar to those expressed in pornography. Although pornography is an industry controlled by men and is most often dominated by men (Dines 2010; Jenson 2007; Paul 2005), females authors are writing paranormal romance novels and yet still have the same themes as pornography. Women in paranormal romance novels are learning their sexuality through men’s desires and like pornography viewers, paranormal romance readers also learn about her own sexuality through men’s desires.

The second pornographic clip I viewed was called “Anal with Black Beauty Skin Diamond” and is 33:26 minutes in length. The clip began with Skin Diamond sitting on a white sofa in panties, a tie, a hat and heels with long socks, claiming to be
a “strong, independent woman” who enjoys nothing more than being “taken” in the bedroom. She states that she likes a strong man who will tell her what to do, or to get down on her knees “so I can worship his cock” and learn “how to please him efficiently.” She continues on saying that:

“I really like being told what to do.”

“Be thrown around a little bit.”

“Manhandled.”

“Worshipping his cock, all the way down, balls deep.”

“I’m here to please, aren’t I?”

She then begins to move around on the couch through direction from the male voice behind the camera, appearing to be turned on only by the thought of pleasing a man. The director tells her how to pose, tells her that her ass is beautiful and tells her to take an “ass up, head down” pose and then to “spread that sexiness.” A male then appears on the couch and tells her not to say anything; he just wants to look at her. He smacks her ass and holds her hands behind her back, while she begs to be able to touch him. When he finally allows her touch him, he tells her to “stroke it with those pretty hands” and “stroke it in front of your pretty face.”

When he finally penetrates her, it is hard to determine if she enjoys it or if his penis is hurting her. She tells him he is “so fucking big” and she wants to have it inside her “cunt.” After he penetrates her vagina, she begins oral sex on him, all the while gagging on the length of his penis to the point where it sounds as though she is vomiting. When the oral sex is complete, he penetrates her anally. Then she asks to
“taste my ass off your cock.” He holds her head still while he thrusts his penis into her mouth while she again gags from the force of it. It almost sounds like she is drowning. He then ejaculates on her face and the camera moves only to her face.

All the while this happening, the man is smacking her breasts, her legs and her ass. He also spits on her vagina and onto her butt. He also takes his penis and smacks her vagina with it as well. She is begging to be “fucked.” He calls her vagina a cunt and calls his penis a “cock” and “dick.”

While this scene may appear to be more vulgar than the ones offered in the sexual encounters in paranormal romance novels, there are some similarities between the two. While anal intercourse is often not mentioned in the novels, the novels feature women eagerly learning how to please their men. The heroines become almost crazed with their need to please the hero sexually.

Authors describe heroines as afraid of the size of the hero’s penis in the story. The hero’s penis is often described as thick and very long, just as the females in the pornographic films describe a male’s penis as “so fucking big.” The heroine often feels trepidation at taking the hero’s penis into her mouth but he is able to coax her into doing so. He often holds her head still, just as described in the film clip, and pushes his penis all the way into her mouth. When her gag reflex kicks in, he often caresses her throat, hoping to relax the muscle so that he can continue instead of stopping the oral penetration (Feehan 2009). I find that in both the romance novel and the pornographic clip, there is complete disregard for the comfort of the female involved in the sexual encounter. The hero and the male in the film often see the
woman as someone who only needs to be coaxed and because of wanton desire, should be willing to do anything to please the male she is with. The biggest difference is that the hero expects and sometimes demands that the heroine be virginal, whereas the male in the film clip does not seem to expect this. However, there is often a lot of discussion in regards to how “tight” the woman’s vagina, ass and mouth are.

The third and final pornographic clip I viewed was “Busty Nikki Benze Went Brunette for This” and was 22:08 minutes in length. Again she talks a little to the camera and then a man appears. She immediately begins performing oral sex on him and masturbating him at the same time. She tells him “I love this fucking huge cock.” She spits on her own breasts and then asks him if he wants to “fuck my boobs?” He of course, agrees to have sex with her breasts and then moves to penetrate her vaginally. He spits on her vagina and her buttocks as this appears to be a common reoccurrence in pornography, as she says “Yeah, fucking pound me.” The male in this film also pushes her head on to his penis as she performs oral sex on him. The film ends with the male ejaculating on the woman’s breasts and her licking the semen off them. Again, there is mention of the size of the man’s penis in this clip, as there is in the paranormal romance novels. Another interesting similarity is the use of the word pound. When the hero and heroine are having sex, pounding is a word that is often used to describe the tempo with which the hero penetrates the heroine.

Pornography is an explicit example of the portrayal of women in media outlets. Research has indicated that it does have an effect on viewers (Allen et al.
Male viewers often become addicted to viewing pornography, can only become aroused when they view pornography and some even become sexual predators (Paul 2005). Females that view pornography are also affected. They are more likely to be less empathetic towards a rape victim and are more likely to accept rape myths, particularly when they view aggressive and violent pornography (Allen et al. 2007; Senn and Radtke 1990) or when the aggression is romanticized (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994).

Paranormal romance novels are much more aggressive and violent, much like pornography, than traditional romance novels (Booth 1997; Hassencahl 1980; Hazen 1983; Leavenworth 2009; Philadelphoff-Puren 2005). As noted, women are also affected by violent pornography (Allen et al. 2007; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994; Senn and Radtke 1990); therefore I argue that it is likely that they are also affected by paranormal romance novels. The current literature would indicate that women who read paranormal romance novels would also be less empathetic towards rape victims and would be more likely to believe rape myths.
Chapter V

Findings: Content Analysis and Discussion of Paranormal Romance Novels

“When a romance presents the story of a woman who is misunderstood by the hero, mistreated and manhandled as a consequence of his misreading, and then suddenly loved, protected and cared for by him because he recognizes that he mistook the meaning of her behavior, the novel is informing its readers that the minor acts of violence they must contend with in their own lives can be similarly reinterpreted as the result of misunderstandings or of jealously born of ‘true love.’” (Radway 1984:75).

Research on paranormal romance novels indicate patriarchal attitudes toward women and suggest an underlying rape myth ideology (Hazen 1983; Light 1984; Wood 2011). I argue that each novel helps illuminate rape myths in society. Furthermore, I find that the sexual encounters in these novels are similar to what one would find in pornography, perpetuating not only rape myths, but also an oppressive sexual ideology for the heroine. Pornography’s influence on romance novels is key to understanding the rape myths that underlie the novels. As it has been argued that pornography, particularly violent pornography, is likely to increase a man’s likelihood of believing rape myths and women’s likelihood of believing rape myths (Allen et al.2007; Dines 2010; Jensen 2007; Paul 2005; Senn and Radtke 1990), it is important to understand the similarities between pornography and romance novels.

Though the heroine, hero and in most instances the reader do not feel that rape has taken place in the stories, I find that the novels indicate such a close likeness to rape that the story could make one question a true rape. I argue that readers could look back on the paranormal romance novels they have read in the past and wonder if the victim of a true rape reacted to a perpetuator the same as the heroines in the story,
how could it possibly be rape when the heroines in the story found a happily ever
after.

In many of the stories, the relationship between the hero and the heroine is a
power struggle. There are three criteria inherent with rape and those are power,
sexuality and anger. The offender dispenses anger and power by acting out sexually
against the victim and derives pleasure from controlling and hurting the victim
(Francoeur 1989). The hero demands the heroine’s attention, requires that she be
sexually available to him and many times roughly grabs her when he tries to stop her
from doing something he doesn’t want her to do. Often in the paranormal romance
novel the hero is struggling to maintain some power over the heroine, either by
changing her behavior or keeping her captive. The hero is often described as angry or
heated many times when he speaks with the heroine. According to Mallory, 30 year
old white female, “The men can be really stubborn and just downright cruel, like
trying to keep a woman in her place” and “the men sometimes do really terrible
things or say terrible things.” This anger and frustration often crosses over to their
sexual encounter, where the hero is left spent and calm after the act itself. The three
components defined as criteria for a rape are present in the paranormal romance
novels.

In *Twilight Memories*, by Maggie Shayne (1994), the two main characters are
Roland and Rhiannon. Both characters are vampires and Rhiannon has lusted for
Roland for centuries. Roland has refused her advances because of her wild and
compulsive nature. She is a bold character very aware of her own sexuality. She
appears to be very comfortable in her own skin. She isn’t afraid to speak her mind and makes it clear to Roland that she wants him. However, according to Roland, Rhiannon is “impulsive, impetuous, and as unpredictable as the weather.” (Shayne 1994:25). She was responsible for awakening the beast inside him and her presence alone made him think of “murder and retribution, had him fighting to control the violent side to his nature” (Shayne 1994:25).

The manner in which Rhiannon dresses is described as provocative. Her dresses cling to her and “she might as well have paraded naked before her gaping admirers for what the garment hid” (Shayne 1994:14). Her dress, to Roland, is described as ridiculous and the focus of the description appears to be on the color of her skin, the lack of covering over her skin, her breasts and her legs. He describes her as an untamed child whom he wants to be ladylike.

According to Shayne’s plot, at sunrise the vampires succumb to such a lethargic state that nothing is able to wake them. However, Roland has found a way to stay awake during the daylight hours. As Rhiannon sinks into the vampire sleep, Roland is so tempted by Rhiannon that he undresses her. He hesitates for only a mere thought, wondering if she would object to his voyeurism (it is important to note here that Rhiannon’s advance towards Roland have been very brusque) as she sleeps helplessly. “No (he thinks). Rhiannon wouldn’t object in the least” (Shayne 1994:93). He then begins to slowly undress her, exposing her entire body to his scrutiny. But he is not satisfied with just a look, for it is only a few paragraphs later that “his fingers settled themselves into the silken nest” (Shayne 1994:94) (Shayne is
obviously referring to Rhiannon’s pubic hair), before moving on downward and eventually into her vagina. He inserts them into her body until her body “trembles” (Shayne 1994:94), an unconscious reaction that Rhiannon has no control over.

Roland “tried not to think that he could strip off his clothing and slip into the bed with her. He could fondle her, touch her, taste her to his heart’s content, and she would never know. He could bury himself inside her. He could find release in her succulent moistness, and she’d never be the wiser.” (Shayne 1994:96). Shayne evens goes so far as to describe how tempting it would be to have Rhiannon’s body respond without the presence of her mind. But Roland refuses to succumb to this desire, admitting to himself that using her this way would be rape, even though he knows that Rhiannon would not object (Shayne 1994:96-97). However, he does not acknowledge that fondling her body is rape as well (Shayne 1994).

According to the rape myth involving bad girls versus good girls (Reddington and Kreisel 2005), Rhiannon placed herself in a position of sexual assault. She made several advances towards Roland, hoping that he would take her up on it. She always dresses provocatively around him and it was her suggestion to sleep in his bed chambers. It is mentioned throughout the story that Roland would like to tame Rhiannon, make her into a lady. He would like to see her more subdued. He doesn’t like the person she is, disapproves of the type of woman that she is, yet he still wants her. And the first time he attempts to take her, she can say nothing back to him. She is unconscious and unable to resist his advances.

The reader would see that Rhiannon knew that she would not be able to
respond to anything he did to her while she slept. Rhiannon knew that she would have no control over her own body, much like a woman who has used alcohol and/or drugs. Rhiannon’s lethargy is very similar to a woman that is intoxicated or has been drugged and one who believes in this particular rape myth could argue that Rhiannon has placed herself in a vulnerable position to be sexually assaulted because she fell asleep around a man that she made several advances towards.

Rhiannon is unable to say “no” at any point when Roland molests her while she sleeps. Why then, would Roland want to have sex with a woman that is unconscious? I argue that some paranormal romances socialize readers to eroticize rape myths, because they portray women as always sexually available and ready to please their partner. Roland does not need Rhiannon’s permission to touch her. Nor does it appear that he enjoys her personality as he wishes to change her behavior. One of the pornographic clips, I viewed illustrates this point as well. In “Anal with Black Beauty Skin Diamond”, Skin Diamond initially seems in charge, eager to please, but when the man appears, he tells her to not speak as he just wants to look at her. Her thoughts and opinions are not what he is after, just as Roland does not desire to hear Rhiannon speak.

Another rape myth that I argue to be evident in this story is that women are for men, are always sexually available and always want to have sex (Hamlin, 2005). They are open to all sexual advances from men, because what woman doesn’t appreciate attention from men? Even though Rhiannon has made several attempts to seduce Roland throughout the story, he has consistently turned her down. Her many
attempts appear that she is always willing and able to have sex with him. The first
time that Roland seems remotely interested in Rhiannon is when she cannot say nor
do anything about what he is doing to her. And he is able to convince himself that
she wouldn’t mind because she has been so eager to have sex with him when she is
conscious. Rhiannon becomes an empty vessel for Roland to fill his own desires
without the presence of her mind and voice, much like Jensen (2007), Paul (2005) and
Dines (2010) argue that women become in pornography.

Rhiannon could be defined as a promiscuous or loose female because of her
inability to control her sexual desire for Roland. Even Roland himself believes that
he is allowed to touch Rhiannon intimately while she sleeps because of her advances
towards him (Shayne, 1994). It would be easy to argue that Rhiannon was not raped.
As these rape myths are perpetuated as the norm in society and organizations such as
public policy, personal reactions to rape victims and jury trials (Lonsway and
Fitzgerald 1994) it would be hard to convict Roland of rape, even though Rhiannon
had no control or power. She has dressed in clothes that show her skin and expose
her body. She has told him over and over that she wants him and that she will stay
with him until she has given herself over to him. And Shayne has made it clear,
through Roland’s interpretations, that Rhiannon would not mind being raped.

Often it is found in paranormal romance novels that women fall into three
categories: 1. Virgins 2. Sexually Inexperienced and 3. Sexually Liberated. When the
heroines are virgins the hero’s are typically thrilled that they are the first man to ever
touch her. According to Mallory, 31, “if she wasn’t (a virgin) the guy would be
pissed that she had been touched by someone else. Sometimes she is sexually liberated, very rarely, but she is constantly throwing herself at the hero and her sexuality is talked about a lot.” Brittany, 48, white female, who reads mostly historical paranormal romance novels also found that the heroine are often typically virgins. However, Brittany, did state that she did not seem to find that in the more contemporary paranormal romance novels. Brittany felt that the heroine’s were often sexually liberated in the more contemporary stories. Sarah, 30, white female, did not seem to find the same thing that Brittany, 48 found in the more contemporary paranormal romance novels. Sarah, 30 found that the heroine’s were often virgins or sexually inexperienced and if neither of those options were available “they’ve had some crazy like abusive foster parent or they were raped. It’s very weird.” Sarah also found herself confused when talking about the differences in sexually experience between the hero and the heroine. “I’m just like why are they so good, or like why they have this guy that’s really good at it, the sex and then there’s this virgin girl.” This suggests that Sarah is aware of a double sexual standard that allow men to be sexually experienced and women are expected to be sexually inexperienced. Sarah, also found that a lot of the characters have “been raped or molested when they were younger.”

When Rhiannon and Roland finally consummate the relationship, the sex is violent and aggressive. It leaves Rhiannon confused and fearful. Roland is described as a frantic, possessed man, tugging and ruthlessly ravaging her nipple. He shoves her thighs apart and transforms her into a “quivering, panting captive” (Shayne
She tries to force him to slow down by placing her hand on his shoulders, his thrusts into her body more than she can handle, but he merely moves them and forces them to the floor and “His pace, if anything, becomes more demanding.” (Shayne 1994:126). He takes blood from her (which is common in vampire novels), but he takes too much, leaving her weak and helpless. Rhiannon describes his eyes as devoid of feeling after the consummation is complete. According to Roland’s thoughts, it was Rhiannon’s body which unleashed the monster inside him, causing him to almost drain her completely of blood.

Roland has possessed Rhiannon’s body and even though she was able to consent to the sexual relationship, he is a demanding and possessive partner. He is not thinking of her needs or her health and safety during the intercourse. She is described as a captive, which could mean that she is held against her will. This sex scene between the hero and heroine is violently depicted as her legs are shoved apart, his thrusts are demanding and he nearly drains her of blood. His behavior is excused because she has asked to be with him sexually since the beginning of the story and she is made responsible for unleashing the monster in him.

The message in the story is very contradictory. On the one hand, Rhiannon begs for Roland’s desire. It is all she could ever hope to have. Then when he gives in to his desire, he becomes ruthless. Shayne states that his rage is mixed with his passion. Rhiannon tries to get him to slow down during the encounter because it wasn’t at all what she envisioned. He is too demanding, to forceful, yet she still manages to orgasm during the intercourse and is described by Shayne as reaching for
it eagerly. She is confused and almost irritated for feeling that confusion because
Roland wanting her and giving in to her was exactly what she wished for. A
reasonable message for paranormal romance readers is that she wanted the force and
the demanding thrusts and the pain that came after, just as women secretly want to be
raped.

Another obvious problem in this novel that I found, that we will see in the
other novels as well, is the power inequality between the hero and the heroine.
Rhiannon first appears in the story as abrasive, bold, assertive. She demands to be
heard and seen and expects to be treated with respect, yet on the very first page of the
story she acknowledges to the reader that she is “not what most males expect a female
to be” (Shayne 1994:7). She, according to the novel, is considered odd, because she
is not quiet and demure. As the story progresses, her strength and vitality begins to
wither away as the hero demands that she not be so bold and assertive. Her strength
revolves around the action of others, it is not derived from her own personal self
confidence, moving from internal to external. It is important to Roland that Rhiannon
change the nature of her ways, “alter her wild nature, calm her impulsive mind”
(Shayne 1994:175) and when she does these things near the end of the story, Roland
is not satisfied with the timid lady that becomes of Rhiannon. He asks that she
change back to the Rhiannon that she was at the beginning of the story and that she
only longs to prove her worth to herself, not to him or her father (who also did not
accept her behavior). And she does. Through Roland’s acceptance of her personal
strength and actions, Rhiannon overcomes the lack of self-confidence that the readers

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feels that she has from the very beginning of the story.

Rhiannon is the strongest character of all of the stories I analyzed, but even she is broken down by the hero. Roland blames her for bringing out the beast in him and his wild nature; hence, he must subdue her in order to subdue himself. According to Brittany, 48, Rhiannon would be impossible to rape, because "it's really hard to rape someone with a strong personality." This illustrates that Brittany has internalized the rape myth that no one could be raped against their will and could prevent the rape if they really wanted to (Hamlin 2005).

The second novel I analyzed is Christine Feehan’s *Burning Wild* (2009). In this story, the hero, Jake, is a shape shifter taking the form of a leopard. Emma, the heroine, is also a shape shifter who takes the form of a leopard. Jake takes Emma under his wing, offering her a place to live so long as she agrees to care for Jake’s infant son who was born during a car accident (the child’s mother dies in the accident). Emma considers herself a domestic servant in Jake’s house, even though she refuses to take pay from him. There is never a sexual relationship between the two for the first two years that Emma lives under Jake’s roof. Emma denies herself any type of personal relationship outside the house, particularly with other men, but also has no female friends to speak of and rarely leaves the home at all. The only other female companion mentioned in the story is a sixteen year-old-girl who has a crush on Jake, whom Jake is often rude and cruel to. Any other woman mentioned in the story is portrayed as deceitful, evil and promiscuous, reiterating the false belief that women cannot trust each other and the only person that could Emma could truly
believe in, is Jake.

When she does decide to date, Jake is furious. He is also not comfortable with strangers in his home, therefore making it nearly impossible for Emma to develop relationships and support systems outside of Jake. It is also important to mention that Jake suffered severe child abuse and neglect by his parents as a child and even cut himself to prove his victories over his parents when he did not whimper or cry when they beat him. He considers the cuts a victory. This sets the stage for the type of character that Jake comes to be as an adult as he never sought therapeutic help for his abuse and feels the need to control and manipulate others around him.

“Emma. His Emma. For two long years, he’d waited patiently for her to come alive. And now she had, but for another man” (Feehan 2009: 218). During her date, with another man, Jake demands that Emma leave with him and is given very little choice. When Emma refuses to ride in the car with Jake he threatens to cause a scene and toss her over his shoulder and force her into the car. She finally agrees to ride with him, not wanting a scene. She is even described as feeling trapped when strapped into her seatbelt by Jake.

Jake is possessive, pulling Emma back in to the house, forcing her to get in to his car when she clearly does not want to and is frightened of him. He is an extremely strong and powerful character, physically and financially. He crushes his enemies, as stated in the story, and is determined to keep Emma with him at all times, even if he has to keep her pregnant from then on. He is unable to emotionally connect with her and the children in the story and does not trust anyone enough to
have male friends of his own. He uses sex to manipulate women and control women and is willing to do the same with Emma.

Jake drives to the house and once there he grabs Emma's wrist again, forcing her out of the car. She asks him to let her go, claiming that he is hurting her. He refuses to release her dragging her to his office, telling her that they need to talk. Jake once again verbally stakes a claim on Emma, announcing that if she were to go on a second date with the man, he would break his neck. Soon thereafter, Jake jerks Emma into his arms, holding fast to her so she cannot move away from him. He kisses her, biting down on her mouth "just hard enough to cause her to gasp and then he was pure male domination, invading her softness, tasting, punishing" (Feehan 2009: 227). This behavior alone is indicative of a domestic violence relationship.

Of course Emma's body melts against his, compliant to his every demand. But throughout the course of the sex scene, Emma requests that he stop, to think about what was happening between them. He doesn't stop and the author claims that Emma couldn't think. Three paragraphs later, she is once again asking Jake to slow down. She is described as "afraid of her own passion, afraid of the sheer intensity and violence neither seemed to be able to control" (Feehan 2009: 231). On page 233, Jake asks Emma "put your mouth on me." She complies with his request and his leopard (the violent, secret part of Jake, demands to be released). He wraps his hands in her hair, holding her face still as he forces his penis deep into her throat. It is only when she begins to struggle under the penetration that he is brought back to "reality" (Feehan 2009: 233). When he can stand no more of her mouth, he pushes against her
aggressively forcing her to the floor. He is described as “towering above her like a conqueror” and Emma responds to this with “uncertainty in her voice as she blinked up at him, a tinge of fear in her eyes” (Feehan 2009: 234).

This fear that appears in Emma’s eyes is often portrayed in women’s eyes in pornographic films. According to Dines (2010) in Pornland, viewers of pornography often describe seeing the female participant fearful of the male participant, particularly in the Max Hardcore videos that they have watched. Thought they appear to be initially disturbed by what they are watching, they eventually become aroused to the pain and suffering that the women go through in order to be in those films. I found that Emma’s fear only entices Jake, particularly his paranormal element, making it so that his arousal to her fear can be blamed on the paranormal element of the story.

Throughout the rest of the scene, Emma is described as Jake’s prey. He claims her as his, daring her to deny that she belongs to him. Because of this belonging Jake tells her that he will never let her go. She belongs to him, and only him and he doesn’t let go of what is his. Emma’s accepted this as fact and is almost grateful because she has no other resources other than Jake. She believes that she will lose everything, including her children, if she were to ever flee him, which she does contemplate doing. This again mirrors a domestic violent relationship as most perpetrators often cut their victims off from friends and family so the victim feels alone and trapped.

I find that this story can be used as an example of the “she asked for it myth”
(Hamlin 2005; Reddington and Kriesel 2005) because Emma convinces herself that she led Jake on by going out on a date with another man. She was to blame for his anger and rage, because she subconsciously set him off. If Emma hadn’t accepted the invitation then Jake wouldn’t have had to have sex with her prove who she really belonged to. Emma even begins to wonder if she did it on purpose to attract the attention of Jake. Another rape myth is that men’s sexual needs are uncontrollable and must be met. Rape is an act of sex, not of violence (Hamlin, 2005). Jake has no control over how he treated Emma during intercourse because he is aroused by her. As a reader, I perceived that Jake must dominate Emma, binding her to him and marking her, equating power and sex.

Sex and violence are so intertwined in the story line that Jake is turned on by Emma’s struggles as she tries to wiggle away from him. She requests that he stop, as she can stand no more, and even feels suffocated when she performs oral sex on Jake as he pushes his penis so deep in her throat that it becomes raw. In this story alone, there are sixty counts of the hero roughly grabbing or touching the heroine, forty-five counts of the hero controlling or trapping the heroine and fifteen counts of the heroine saying no the sexual advances of the hero (See Table 2).

Jake is not only violent towards Emma, but his violence towards another man is highly tolerated in the story line. Radway (1984) found that in historical romance novels, readers were tolerant of violence against the perceived villain. The readers despise the villain and want him destroyed by the hero. The villain is the male character in the story that typically tries to take the heroine away from the hero. The
hero is jealous of the villain and his priority, other than wooing than heroine, is to rid
the story of the villain. The date that Emma went on with another man, allows Jake
to express his aggression at another person who is not Emma. He threatens bodily
harm to the man, wanting to break his neck and is completely cruel to him when he
sees Emma having dinner with him.

But is there much difference between the way Jake talks about the other man
and the way that Jake responds to Emma sexually? He is described as pure male
domination, taking over her, forcefully pulling her back, wrenching her body around.
He forces his penis deep into her throat, yanks her hair back, ejaculates all over face
all the while dominating her. It is nearly impossible to distinguish this sexual
encounter from what one would see while watching a pornographic film. For
example, in three of clips that I viewed the males ejaculated on the woman’s face.
All three of the clips included ejaculation outside the body. In the story itself, Emma
is furious over the action by Jake and proceeds to storm out of the house.

Jake’s feelings toward the villain are similar to the way he is described when
he has sex with Emma. When Jake realizes that Emma is out to dinner, it is said that
he furious, can barely contain himself. This is aggression carries over to his sexual
encounter. Aggression and rage are the only two emotions that are truly ever emitted
from Jake. He must overpower Emma and stay in control of her, just as he does with
his enemies and his business. This is illustrative of what Philadelphoff-Puren (2005)
found in her research. She found that the heroes were violent and overbearing and the
romance novel mixes aggression and seduction.
Emma is a submissive character in the story. She maintains the home and does everything to please Jake. When Jake beckons for her, she comes running, leaving the chores and children behind. He is her first priority, even above herself. It is not always the case that the heroine’s are so openly submissive, however, I find that all women are submissive in the paranormal romance novels. I have read ones that initially have strong personalities and then subordinate themselves to the heroes in the stories. I wanted to know what other readers thought about the heroes and heroines in the stories and if they had found the same things that I did. When I first asked the readers what they thought about the characters, their initial responses revolved around the characters physical appearances.

“The women are always beautiful, ravishing and nothing can ever compare to their looks. And the men are god-like.” Mallory, 31.

“They’re all rich and they’re the best looking person that you know. None of them’s ugly or fat or well of course the women aren’t either. They’re basically, you know, beautiful and skinny and have money.” Sam, 50, white female.

“They’re always beautiful, which I guess is kind of the whole point. No one wants to read about ugly people…I realize I’m being shallow when I read it too, cause I’m like yeah, of course he’s beautiful.” Sarah, 30.

“They’re always perfect.” Tiffany, 31, white female.

“I like that they’re always beautiful people. However, I think they could make them more human…They’re always perfectly fit and strong and you know. You never find anybody that’s plump or got warts or freckles or moles or anything.
They’re always perfect. And I think that’s because they’re paranormal...So they
don’t have the same deformities. So, I think that, I get jealous.” Brittany, 48.

These are replicas of the women that you can view in most pornographic
films. They typically have large breasts, long hair, perfect bodies, and perfectly
manicured nails and rarely have warts, freckles or moles. This is not always the case
with the male counterparts, as they are sometimes overweight, hairy, and short and
may have imperfections that are viewable. They may also be attractive, similar to the
men physical characteristics in the romance novels. The women in the films,
however, appear to be comfortable in their bodies, at least while they are in the films.
This is not often the case in the paranormal romance novels, as many of the women
are described as feeling awkward and uncomfortable the first time the hero sees them
naked. She is often fearful that he will not like what he sees and often thinks to
herself that her breasts are too large or too small, her thighs to thick, and her butt not
nice enough. Authors explore body image issues in paranormal romance novels.
While insecurities may develop in a porn stars real life, such as the case with Stacey
Valentine (2005), it is rarely depicted onscreen.

As I dove deeper in to the interviews, I begin to ask questions specifically
about the personalities of the characters and if the readers felt that they represented
real life men and women. It was quite obvious that none of the subjects felt they were
adequate representations, again claiming that they were too perfect. But they also
seemed to like that they weren’t representative as they did not want to read about ugly
people and enjoyed reading how beautiful people were. As far as the heroine’s
personality went, the subjects felt the characters were either strong-willed or submissive.

"Stronger than some women, personality wise, as well as how to say it. They know what they want and they go for it. They’re not timid or backward or shy. And I think most women have that, they’re a little timid especially when they’re confronted by this big arrogant good-looking man, they’re real timid, more reticent. Where in here, not so much. They have their strong personality similar to the men.” Brittany, 48.

"Most women wouldn’t react in the ways that they do…Like everything is ok whether it is or not.” Tiffany, 31.

"The women get over things too easy I think and in a perfect world that would happen I suppose…They just seduce the heroine and all is right with the world again…It’s rare to see a female in the novel actually stand against the man that does that to her, but then he just fixes it with sex when she gets mad.” Mallory, 31.

"I would agree that they are represented, as far as like independent spirits and women doing things on their own. I get that, but they are exaggerated at some points…I notice that some writers have more submissive female characters than others, to the point where I’m like ok, no, why didn’t you say something?” Sarah, 30.

While it was difficult to determine a consensus on the heroine’s role in the story and whether or not she represented real women, all of the subjects seemed to agree on the personalities of the heroes in the stories. Again, like the women, the men are described as physically perfect, rich and powerful. “Almost all the males are
arrogant” according to Brittany,48 “It makes them more likable when the women come in” and “even though they’re heroes, you just want to reach in and smack them”. Tiffany, 31 said “I don’t think most men are that chauvinistic”. Mallory, 31, felt that the men were too rough with the women, particularly since she found most of the heroines to be victims of sexual assault. In Christine Feehan’s *Dark Series*, the heroines are often victims of severe sexual assault, by an uncle, step-father or vampire. This is the series that Mallory refers to when talking about the heroine’s sexual abuse.

Could it really be as simple as wanting love that powerful that you would be willing to sacrifice everything you stand for just to please your partner? Or could it be that women are socialized to serve men sexually and that pornography and paranormal romance novels play on that socialization? In pornography and paranormal romance novels, it appears that both occur. Most paranormal creatures live an immortal life. Therefore in order to maintain a faithful, monogamous relationship, there must be desire so strong that it will not fade away with time. At least, that is the argument that I have found in some of the stories that I have personally read. But it seems that women are the ones that continually make sacrifices for the males. It is their role, in paranormal romance novels, to make the hero a better man, just as Brittany, 48, stated. In order to make him a better man, she must be the one to be the caretaker, the giver, the one to sacrifice, so that he may learn from her behavior. Although pornography only deals with the act of sex itself, the woman again is the one who is the caretaker, the giver and the one who sacrifices.
It is up to her to please her partner sexually, meeting all of his demands and that of
the director and the audience (who are also typically male) who view the clip.
According to Gretchen E. Anderton (2009:78) in “Excitement, adventure, indifferent:
romance reader’s perceptions of how romance impacts their sex lives,” women feel
that it is a “serious wifely duty to be creative and enthusiastic lover.”

In the Lords of the Underworld series, by Gena Showalter (2008) the hero’s
souls are imprisoned with a demon that was released when the guardians opened
Pandora’s Box. In The Darkest Night’s, the first novel in the series, the hero is
named Maddox and contains the demon violence. The heroine in the story is named
Ashlyn. Ashlyn has a psychic skill. When she approaches an area, she is able to hear
all of the voices of the past that were also in the same place as her. She comes
seeking the demons. Upon Ashlyn’s arrival it is Maddox who finds her wandering
the grounds of their home looking for the men who host the demons so that she may
stop the voices in her head. Maddox is enraged that Ashlyn has come, claiming that
she is “bait” (Bait is typically female and uses her sexuality to gain access to the
Lords. Bait is sent by hunters who are tracking the Lords so that may kill them).

Ashlyn is taken to the dungeons for safe keeping. Ashlyn realizes that she is
now a captive in the house and thinks to herself that she needs to run. However, she
does not. Instead she follows Maddox as he leads her to his bedroom. She asks him
to take her back to the city and he refuses her. Ashlyn does not realize though that
Maddox has planned a way to seduce her and has set up the “perfect” scenario in his
bedroom. She is also not aware that after Maddox seduces her, he intends to kill her.
Ashlyn continues to ask for her freedom. She asks him then if he has done this to many women and he questions what she is talking about. He makes reference to seducing them or entrancing them. Ashlyn denies this is what he doing by saying “Locked them away. What else?” (Showalter 2008: 91). Then she thanks him for the food and bed (Showalter 2008).

“You don’t need to kiss her to fuck her.” (Showalter 2008: 101) is Maddox’s demon’s thought. An astounding similarity to the terminology used in pornography. The term “fuck” is used frequently in pornography and kissing occurs infrequently in the films. His own thoughts correspond with his demon of Violence when on page 127 (Showalter 2008) he claims to himself that he will not have tenderness for Ashlyn. And he would prove this by taking her body the next time he sees her. “He would take her hard and fast, pounding... pounding...She would moan and scream his name...Of its own accord, the image realigned in his head, shifting to please Violence. She would be on her stomach, braced on her hand and knees. That lovely hair would cascade down her elegant back and he would grab hold of it, tugging.”

On page 192 (Showalter 2008), Maddox demands that Ashlyn remove her clothes. He intends to help her bathe even though she does not want him to. He tells her to remove them three times and on the third time, she finally says “No” and she starts to move to the exit of the bathroom. Maddox reaches behind her and shuts the door and blocks her escape. “The soft clink echoed off the walls, and she gulped. Paled.” (Showalter 2008: 193). It is obvious that Ashlyn does not want to undress in front of him, but she tries to rationalize it because he helped to care for her while she
became sick due to the wine she drank. Showalter then begins to shift Ashlyn’s hesitation from the fear she feels at the thought of being with him, to body image issues, that Maddox will not like what he sees (Showalter 2008: 195).

Due to the integrated nature of the male gaze, Dines (2010) argues that women are now more critical of their own bodies than anyone else. Women must be hypersexual as well as toned, shaved and live by a set of standards based on what men think. They are never satisfied with what they see in the mirror as their butts are too big or too small, breasts aren’t large enough, stomach is too big or they have arms that aren’t tone enough. Ashlyn is a prime example of this internalized male gaze. She is more concerned about her body image and how Maddox sees her then being basically forced to have sex with someone she does not know.

She eventually removes her clothing and they proceed to the shower. When Maddox first touches Ashlyn and begins to wash her, she stiffens against him apparently uncomfortable with the scenario laid out before her. Maddox ignores it and continues to touch her. She wanted to stay with Maddox. Therefore, she has asked for this treatment. Eventually Ashlyn turns into a compliant docile female unable to refuse the needs of her body. When Maddox penetrates her, he realizes quickly that she is a virgin. He stops and withdraws from her body. He condemns himself for almost taking her virginity when he hadn’t even kissed her. Although he is pleased that no other man has ever had her, he realizes that she is a good woman and deserves more than a quick roll in the shower. Her virginity is what convinces Maddox that she is not “bait” as was his initial response to her presence (Showalter
On page 290 (Showalter 2008), Ashlyn and Maddox finally copulate. Maddox is described as ferocious, snarling and offering a “perfect balance between pleasure and pain” (Showalter 2008: 291). He grips her ass, jerks her to him, biting her, pinching her, but not forcing her. Ashlyn had grown up alone because of her gift and had been “starved for touch. Any touch.” (Showalter 2008: 290). At the climax, Maddox bites so hard into Ashlyn that he draws blood (Showalter 2008: 297). This bite is later blamed on the demon that demanded Maddox bite her.

Ashlyn’s story can be used to illustrate another example of the rape myth “she asked for it” (Hamlin 2005; Reddington and Kreisel 2005). Ashlyn begged Maddox to keep her with him, putting herself in the position to lose all her power. Maddox dominates Ashlyn by keeping her locked up; refusing to allow her to shower by herself and by continuing what he considers foreplay even when he is asked to stop. Any time he leaves her to herself she is locked up somewhere, either in his bedroom or with the four other women the Lords have kidnapped.

Ashlyn could also be used to exemplify the “no” means “yes” rape myth (Reddington and Kreisel 2005). Ashlyn has asked Maddox to stop, to give her room to breathe and think. He ignores these requests and continues on. But Ashlyn’s “no” turns into a “yes” as Maddox continues to assault her. When a woman reads this, will she view the “no” means “yes” rape myth as accurate? This story illustrates that if a woman is swept off her feet just enough, she will melt against a man and accept him willingly. She really just needs an extra push. As women are affected after viewing
violent pornography and are much more likely to believe rape myths (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994; Senn and Radtke 1990) it is easy to argue that women are just as likely to read paranormal romance novels that illustrate rape myths in a romantic fashion and be more susceptible to believing them and would be less empathetic towards a rape victim.

Subjects were also asked to discuss the sexual encounters between the hero and the heroine. Two of the subjects refuse to read the sex scenes or will lightly skim them as they do not feel that the sexual encounters are “a big deal for me” or they feel “uncomfortable”, said Sam, 50, when reading them. When asked why they felt uncomfortable reading the sexual encounters, Sam responded that “It just makes me uncomfortable to read and it make me uncomfortable to talk about it.” Sam suggested that the language used in the romance novels made her feel uncomfortable. She also said that the sex scenes felt pornographic and if she “wanted to watch or read it, then I would rent a video.” She stated that she did not understand why the authors felt the need to put so much detail in to the encounters between the hero and the heroine. Tiffany, 31, who also did not read the sexual encounters, felt that it was invasive to read them and that the sexual encounters are “dirty.” “To me you shouldn’t be in somebody else’s sex life. And it’s the same thing. It’s just like watching porn. I don’t believe in watching porn.” She described the experience as invasive as another individual’s sex life is none of her business.

Three of the subjects, however, do read the sexual encounters. They felt the scenes were violent, too graphic, and aggressive or even borderline rape. Sarah, 30,
described the scenes as “hotter than regular romance...it’s pages...but it always seems to be kind of like the character itself, violent and graphic.” When asked if this type of sexual encounter bothered her at all, she said it depended on the author and the characters in the stories. She felt that most people have a dark edge and with paranormal romance novels you really see that dark edge. However, there are times when she felt uncomfortable reading the sex scenes. She specifically mentioned the Christine Feehan Dark Series, discussing a claiming encounter during one of the stories. The claiming occurred when the female turned eighteen and was paraded in front of all the males to see if any of them were her mate. When she did find her mate, the subject said “this kind of pushed my comfort zone the very first time they had sex. It was very violent.”

Mallory, 31 said the sex scenes included roughly grabbing or pounding in to the heroine and “pounding sounds brutal.” Mallory, 31 also talked about instances in which the characters appeared in animal form and had sex. According to Mallory, 31: “In one story, the guy is a werehunter. He’s part wolf, part man, but mostly wolf. When he has sex with his partner, his penis gets larger just like a dog is supposed to. I think that’s really gross. And apparently described as painful in the story. Or they will shape shift. Some of them turn in to dragons and have sex in dragon form.” Mallory also found that women will say no to the first sexual advances towards the hero but eventually concede because they are too consumed with passion, “which is almost romantic because you want love that powerful, but it’s almost like rape, because even when they say no, they still have sex.” Brittany, 48, described the
sexual encounters as "pretty out there" and "a lot of them border on rape." She did feel that the heroine seemed to be aroused by the sexual encounter, but it is very violent and it wasn't something that she really enjoyed reading. The example she provided was from a Guardians of Eternity novel in which the hero just threw the heroine up on the table and ripped her legs apart "went to you know, business. But that's what she (the heroine) liked. But to me that was just borderline rape."

According to Dines (2010) women in pornographic films also appear to enjoy the brutality of the sex scene. Viewers believe that women love the forceful sex, love ATM (ass-to-mouth), anal sex, being referred to as sluts or cunts or whores and that they are in the films because they love sex so much and not because of the money they make. This is similar to what Brittany finds when she reads the novels. Of course the women are portrayed as enjoying the sexual encounter. They are characters in a novel that are manipulated into enjoying it, just as the women in the films are paid to pretend to enjoy the sexual encounter. However, in the three stories that have been analyzed so far the women did not fully enjoy the sexual encounters. Emma was outraged that Jake had ejaculated all over her face and was afraid of him. Rhiannon was confused and almost drained of blood during her encounter with Roland. Ashlyn initially told Maddox "no" and was ignored. These are not examples of women who have enjoyed the sexual encounter with the hero as Brittany described. These are fictional women who were degraded, left emotionally unsatisfied and I argue in Ashlyn's case, raped.

The terminology was also something that bothered her when the authors were
talking about the sexual encounters. “They name body parts that border on pornography.” Brittany, 48, mentioned the difference in the terms used in the historical romance versus the more contemporary romance stating that, “it’s more calling it the manhood instead of the cock.” Brittany felt the contemporary paranormal romance novels were more “slam them up against the wall and do’em.”

Ashlyn, however, craves a touch from someone, any man’s touch, as Showalter explains. She was denied these things growing up, so she will settle for Maddox’s violent, aggressive nature because any touch would be better than none. She is compliant and docile, eventually eager to accept Maddox and his violent nature. Ashlyn is the type of heroine that is described by Philadelphoff-Puren (2005), docile and submissive. He is her captor and she becomes sexually attracted to him. Maddox is also what Hassencahl (1980) defines as a protector. When Ashlyn is around Maddox, the voices in her head disappear, therefore offering her release from what she considered her curse. He is the first male in her life that has really ever appeared to be sexually attracted to her as does not consider her a freak or an asexual woman as other men in her past have.

It also interesting that certain sexual acts that Maddox performs on Ashlyn embarrasses her. When Maddox discovers that Ashlyn is a virgin, he determines that she should not be taken in the shower as a virgin deserves more than that. However, he does want to please her, so he asks her how he should finish her. She says his hands, but he feels that she really wants him to perform oral sex on her, but she is too embarrassed to ask for him to do so. She even admits to herself later that she was
embarrassed about the act itself. Her assumed virtue is the only thing that keeps Maddox from “fucking” her, reinforcing the “good girl vs. bad girl” myth (Reddington and Kreisel 2005).

In *The Darkest Night* (Showalter, 2008) the sexual encounters are graphic and violent. The terminology used to describe the body parts of the characters are described in explicit detail. The hero once again has control over the heroine, demands the she undress even when she does not want to and intends to “fuck” her. And of course she would want it, all women want sex all the time from all men (Jensen 2007).

In *Winter Born*, Sherrilyn Kenyon (2004) writes about two were-hunters. The heroine in this story is named Pandora. She was stolen from the future and brought to the present time by a Katagaria pack so that they can attempt to mate with her. The packs intention is to share the female Arcadian with all the males in the pack hoping that she can mate with one. If not, they will keep her to use sexually among the other males in the pack. The oldest brother, Dante, has no desire to see Pandora so he asks the mated brother Romeo, to keep her away from him. He also encourages the two younger ones, Leo and Mike to find her. Dante is the hero of the story. Pandora would not be able to refuse the males as she is in heat, similar to an animal. She has no control over her body and would throw herself at any male. “The worst part was that a panther male couldn’t rape a panther female when she was in heat. All he had to do was come near her and she would willingly accept him. It was nature and pantheress had no control over her body at such time. It wouldn’t listen to
reason or rational. She would beg him to fill her. The shame of it would come later, after the mating was done.” (Kenyon 2004: 18).

This exhibits the rape myth that women often lie about rape (Reddington and Kreisel 2005), as a woman will consent to sex with a man and then feel “shamed” that she consented to sex and then resort to crying rape so that she saves face (Reddington and Kreisel 2005). The fact that Showalter uses the term “shame” in this scene is indicative of how others might believe that women would knowingly have sex and then say they were raped. It is important to point out that rape victims often do feel shame because they were actually raped, not because they consented, but because rape myths are so deeply internalized, the victim often feels she is to blame for the rape (Reddington and Kreisel 2005).

Dante finds Pandora in a hotel room and she allows him to enter. The human, rational part of herself wants to send him away, but the animal refuses to allow her to do so. When she tells him she accepts him, he “turned on her with a fierce growl as he seized her” (Kenyon 2004:25). Pandora is described as nervous and yet so turned on all she could think about was having Dante. She is also completely naïve and even asks Dante if the orgasm is going to hurt her. Dante is described as all strength and power, even wicked. He growls before scooping her up, smiles at her wickedly. On page 48 (Kenyon 2004), Dante even admits that with his magical power, he could force Pandora to do anything he wants. Her virginity is more valued than anything else to the were-hunters and many other males would kill for the privilege of taking it.

In a second sex scene between Dante and Pandora, he takes her back to his
hotel room and declares that it is their room. Then he begins to stalk her “like the hungry predator he was” (Kenyon 2004:51). She claims the world she is in now is terrifying, “except for Dante” (Kenyon 2004:52). When they have intercourse, Dante has a wave of “demanding possessiveness” (Kenyon 2004:54) come over him although mating with her calms the beast inside him. Pandora thinks “A man who ought to terrify and repulse her was about to become her mate” (Kenyon 2004: 54).

Pandora’s sexual encounter illustrates the myth that an individual cannot be raped against his/her own will (Hamlin 2005). Pandora has no control over her body as her animal instinct takes over. She is in no position of power over Dante even though technically, according to the storyline, she has the right to refuse him. Though Pandora is not raped by Dante in the story, Kenyon uses Pandora’s animal heat to disallow rape in the novel. It is even stated that Pandora cannot be raped because of the animal side of her, indicating the myth that women are available for sex at all times because they are eager to sexually please their partner, therefore, wanting sex at all times.

**Common Themes**

Throughout these four novels there are common themes including that the heroine is often roughly touched, particularly during sex. Jensen (2007) finds that in pornographic films, the words “pounding” “roughly grabbing” “all the way down to the balls” “grabs her hair” “Fuck me, fuck me please” are often part of the sexual act (61-63). According to my analysis, there were 78 counts (see Appendix 1 for additional tables) of the hero roughly touching or grabbing the heroine in the four
The words used to describe how the hero touches the heroine include: jerking her to him, biting her hard enough to make her yelp or cry out from pain, pushes against her possessively, grips or slams in to her, hovers over her like a conqueror, yanking or defining her as prey. She often feels that the hero is looking at her in a predatory manner. In most instances, this would make a woman feel uncomfortable and scared, and in the novels there are times that hero does frighten the heroine. However, usually the heroine is turned on by the predatory look that the hero gives her, and

Table 5 - Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>Heroine says no sexual advances made by the hero</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence or threat of violence against the heroine by the hero</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine was sexually abused, virgin or n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>References to rape</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
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<td>Violence against a secondary female character</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploration of secondary female character's sexual history and considered,</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slut, whore, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mention of female bringing out beast or wildness in hero</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roughly grabs, touches, etc. the heroine</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildness in hero mentioned: predator, dangerous, brutal, violent, etc.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme jealousy by hero</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlling/Trapping the heroine</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine's virtue questioned</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine changes hero, makes him care, calms him</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine is afraid of hero</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2-virgin; 1-sexually liberated with some past sexual abuse; 1-sexually inexperienced.
feels safe and comforted by his possessive and controlling nature.

There are 20 total instances in which the heroine says no to the hero’s sexual advances, asks him to stop or is unable to speak out at all. Typically the sexual advances do not stop with any regard to how many times the heroine has said no and she eventually concedes to having sex with him. Jensen (2007), Dines (2010) and Paul (2005) argue that in pornography women like the sexual acts that men demand from them and with a little force, the woman is willing to do whatever is asked of her, be that from her sexual partner, the director, producer or the male audience. The heroine also plays in to this in the romance novel, by willingly complying with the sexual demands of the hero without thought to her discomfort or pain. According to Jensen (2007:75), “rape is about the fusion of sex and domination, about the eroticization of control.” This is easily illustrated in pornography and paranormal romance novels.

Helen Hazen (1983) argues that paranormal romance novels confuse seduction and aggression. This appears to be very prominent in the stories I have analyzed. The hero rarely touches the heroine gently during intercourse, and instead words like fuck, bite, pound and etc are used. Hazen (1983), Booth (1997), Philadelphoff-Puren (2005) and Wood (2011) also state that hero is often overbearing and violent. He makes his intentions very clear and is able to execute them accordingly. Leavenworth (2009) also argues that violence has become a key factor in paranormal romance novels, much like it as in pornography. Pornography is changing to include more violence and rape depictions than ever before. The Price of
Pleasure (2008) argues that individuals become easily bored with what they see and therefore pornography has to change in order for people to watch. This appears to be affecting romance novels as well, as words and depictions of sexuality that mimic porn are now used.

I find that in paranormal romance novels, heroines typically suffer from deep rooted insecurities, often stemming from past relationships with other men and their fathers. Most often the heroine has been ridiculed because of a special ability, such as Ashlyn, referred to as a freak and sexually undesirable; or outcaste by her father because she was female, like Rhiannon was. In some series, such as the Dark Series by Christine Feehan, the heroine is a victim of sexual assault or molestation. The hero is typically the first person to have shown any kind of affection to the heroine and makes it clear to her that she is sexually desirable. The heroes, however, are arrogant and confident. They display patriarchal tendencies such as extreme jealously or possessiveness. They continually claim the heroine as theirs and are often considered dangerous, violent and brutal. According to Table 5, I found 81 one times that the hero was considered violent, brutal, predatorily or dangerous in just four novels. Radway (1984) found in her interviews that the readers did not like to read the stories where the hero was too brutal or aggressive. One would think then that heroes and sex scenes found in the paranormal romance novels would be unacceptable to the readers. Radway (1984) also found that readers thought that the heroines should constrain their sexuality if she did not want to be raped. In two of the stories featured here the heroines were virgins, one had some sexual experience in her
plays a significant role in helping the hero, but he also helps her move past her own insecurities by forcing her to see that she is only trying to prove her worth to herself due to her many rejections.

The third character found in paranormal romance novels, as defined by Hassencahl (1980), is a persecutor who is overly critical of the heroine and sets the stage for social interaction. While these types of characters also exist in the stories, and are typically prominent males in the heroine’s life, the hero could also be interpreted as a persecutor. The hero controls the social interaction that the heroine has with other male and female characters in the story. He traps the heroine and locks her up so that she may not escape him. Arguably the heroine leaves one persecutor for another, much like domestic violence situations. Some domestic violence victims leave home at early ages to escape violence to end up in another violent and emotionally damaging relationship (Cannon et al. 2009).

These stories also illustrate what Deborah L. Tolman (1994) in “Doing Desire: Adolescent Girls’ Struggle for/with Sexuality” terms “crisis of connection.” The women in the stories are sexually inexperienced and meeting the desires of the hero in order to learn their own sexuality. Throughout their lives, their sexuality has been repressed and is only awakened when they meet the hero. They know their sexuality and their own selves through the hero. They have suppressed their desire in order to be good girls or nice girls and to keep from opening themselves up to be ridiculed or to be called “sluts” or “whores.” They fulfill themselves sexually only through love and monogamous relationships, whereas the heroes in the stories are able to explore
their sexuality openly with criticism. Even when they are able to explore their sexuality safely, without ridicule, they are still confused about what their bodies are telling them they want. They have sexual desire but they also hold back those desires in favor of the hero. And they most certainly are not allowed to explore their desire with other male characters. This is not acceptable to the hero and according to Radway, not acceptable to other readers. According to Tolman (1994:310) “In ‘not knowing’ desire, girls and women are often at risk for not knowing that there is nothing wrong with having sexual feelings and responding to them in ways that bring joy and agency.” This confusion the heroines’ model in the paranormal romance novels reflect a cultural confusion readers may experience as well.
Chapter VI

Interpretations

When I began this project I was most interested in learning about the readers and how they felt about what they were reading. I knew that I no longer felt comfortable with most of the romance novels I was reading and I began to wonder if others felt the same way. What I found were paranormal romance novels that had sexual encounters similar to pornography, novels that, I argue were embedded with rape myths and readers who were so uncomfortable with the sexual encounters that they refused to read them or they skimmed them or considered them violent, pornographic and border line rape.

It was *Burning Wild* (Feehan 2009) that really made me stop and think about the sexual encounters between the hero and heroine. I had never before felt that a romance novel sex scene was so pornographic and I began to think back to other paranormal romance novels I had read. When the hero ejaculated all over the heroine’s face, I was never more disgusted by what I was reading. I realized that they had all become more graphic, using the words “dick” and “cock,” yet still referring to a heroine’s vagina as moistness or her wet, slick heat. The words themselves did not bother me at first. I rarely found them offensive and I used to laugh when they called the vagina a flower or a man’s penis his engorged manhood. It was almost refreshing to have someone write encounters in a straightforward manner. But I knew the words were also the same words that were used in pornography.

Not only were the words used to describe the sexual encounter pornography,
but the touches in the romance novels were no longer described as soft and gentle. The love seemed to be taken completely out of the sexual encounter, just as it is nonexistent in pornography. Sex became a demand from the hero to the heroine. The heroine’s sexuality was learned from the hero, just as a woman in a pornographic film also learns about sexuality through desires of men (Dines 2010; Jensen 2007).

I realized that all this time, I had missed the underlying violence in the hero. I had missed the hidden rape myths. The hero was the bad boy that needed taming or the darkness. When he found the heroine, she became his light, the only thing that kept him sane. But even then, he was aggressive towards her, viewing her the same way he would view a male that he was jealous of (Feehan 2009). He became controlling, demanding and all of that emerged during the sexual encounter between the two characters. He was forceful, demanding, unwilling to take “no” for an answer (Feehan 2009; Kenyon 2004; Shayne 1994; Showalter 2008). The heroine’s virtue was questioned. If she were a virgin, she deserved more from the hero, indicating that only loose, promiscuous women are raped. Other rape myths, such as: women are available for sex all the time and want sex all the time; women secretly wish to be raped; women are impossible rape; became obvious to me as I began to complete a thorough analysis of the sexual encounters.

What I once found highly erotic and entertaining, I began to find highly offensive, vulgar and pornographic. And so have other readers that were interviewed. They often skim or completely skip the sexual encounters between the hero and the heroine. So why, if I knew all of this was happening, did I continue to read them?
Did other readers see what I was seeing and if they did, why would they continue to read them?

Reading romance novels was a way for me to escape. It was also a way for me to travel to other countries. Due to the stories I’ve read, I’ve been to Montana, Budapest, Rome, Italy, Ancient Greece and many other places, while sitting on my couch, riding in the car or sometimes even in the classroom. I’ve explored so many different ideas and thoughts that I find that for myself, it’s almost like an addiction. Once I started a book, I couldn’t stop until I had completely finished it. I knew there was going to be a happy ending, but I still had to read the story. It became even more difficult when I read a series. Authors would introduce new characters in the most recent book and I would become enchanted with those characters and would want to read their stories. However, in most instances you have to read the stories in order to know what is happening, so of course I would read all the stories in between. I became an addict much like Dines (2010) and Paul (2005) say men become when viewing pornography.

There were also characters that I truly enjoyed reading about. There were funny moments in a story that I would laugh out loud too or tragic moments in the story that would break my heart just as it had the characters in the story. I felt that I became more adapt at analyzing while I reading, that I learned new words, that I became a more well-rounded person. But I also found myself embarrassed telling people that I enjoyed reading romance novels, almost as if there was a stigma because I enjoyed them. I have heard them called pornography for women; a woman’s book
and even an episode of Friends indicated that they were porn. So why do we as women, read them?

The hero spends a great deal of time coaxing the heroine into a sexual relationship as opposed to what is seen in pornography. In pornographic clips, there is no relationship between the characters of the story other than a sexual one and within seconds the characters are engaged in some kind of sexual foreplay or penetration (Dines 2010) but in the romance novel the sex generally occurs during the middle of the book as the hero and the heroine often attempt to build a relationship other than a sexual one. They often converse, laugh or sometimes do not like each other in the beginning of the story.

This relationship building is very important to the readers of romance novels (Radway 1984). But it also may be central to teaching women patriarchal stereotypes and submitting themselves to their partners sexually, unlike pornography that teaches men how women should submit and perform sexually (Dines 2010). The heroines in the stories often meet a tall, dark, rich, handsome hero who offers to be her savior. He becomes her protector, as defined by Hassencahl (1980) unlike in pornography where the male character offers no promise of protection or a future relationship with the women in the clips. The heroine is defined by her sexual status (Light 1984) and trains readers to subsist in a patriarchal relationship and view that relationship as romantic (McKay and Parson 2009). Romance novels can help women make sense of the patriarchal personal relationships that they have as these novels teach women that they need men to be fulfilled (Wood 2011). This relationship dynamic and how it
affects readers would be something to explore in further research.

Escape was also what the subjects said they liked best about the novels. They are able to identify with the storylines, with the characters and can often see similarities to their own relationships or to the relationships of people they know. Although there is often danger in the novel that hero and heroine have to escape from, subjects said they could see parallels in their own life to this type of drama in a relationship. When asked why they read paranormal romance, interview subjects responded:

"It’s enough of everyday normal life to keep comfortable as far as the sci-fi element but I can focus on the fact that there’s a werewolf or a vampire or some super human being…kind of escape and things be unbelievable and weird.” Sarah, 30.

"There’s always a happy ending. I don’t like sad endings.” Sam, 50.

"Because it’s different. And it makes you think it could have happened or it could happen.” Brittany, 48.

“I like the love. I like the human struggle the characters had to go through. I like that I’m swept away for a while because when I’m reading nothing else exists around me.” “It’s a slip out of reality. My chance to get away.” Mallory, 30.

“It’s more of a take me out reality when I read then trying to identify with something.” Tiffany, 31.

The paranormal elements allowed the subjects to truly escape from reality as
they described the characters as strange and fascinating. Most of the subjects had switched to paranormal because they had become bored with the traditional romance novels, or they had just randomly picked up the novels and thought it was fascinating to read. Many of the subjects had previously read books like Interview with the Vampire by Anne Rice or other novels that had paranormal elements that did not have romantic inclinations making the transition to paranormal romance novels easy.

Subjects were also asked what they did not like about the romance novels. Sarah, 30, was unable to define anything she didn’t like about the novels; however, as we discussed different elements of the story, Sarah determined that there were elements that did make her uncomfortable, such as too much sexual aggression and the whirlwind of the romance between the two characters. Sarah, 30 felt it was hard to really process everything that had happened in the story because everything happened so fast between the two characters. Sam, 50, felt the storylines were unreal:

“They’re out of, you know, where I come from, it’s just the country. I think that they just, to me they give you the feeling that it will happen in a book, but it’s not going to happen in real life. You know you could find that love in your life, but I mean is it going to last forever? And is it going to be that, when you kiss is it going to be that, fireworks going on off in your head and your eyes. And that don’t happen. I don’t think so.”

Brittany, 48, explained:

“I think I dislike the fact they make me think. I guess because they are so perfect that they don’t have any imperfection. They’re always the best
looking and they’re gorgeous, you know perfect physical appearance. I’d like
to see them with lumps and bumps and bruises and what not. More human,
but being paranormal, again, they don’t.”

Tiffany, 31, said:

“The portrayal of the people aren’t true.”

Mallory, 30, shared:

“I don’t like the same story over and over. And I don’t like sex too soon in
the book. I don’t like the sex much at all in the story. I kind of expect it to be
like it is in a romantic movie. Everything looks so soft and there’s so much
emotion when two people are together in a movie. But it’s almost like
coercion in the book. And the terminology has changed a lot since I began
reading them. It’s way more descriptive that what it ever was before. And I
don’t like it when they focus on the weight of the female character in the
story. That really bothers me. I guess because I’ve struggled with my weight
most of my life. It’s one of my primary focuses now, because I know I’m
expected to look a certain way as a woman and to have that constantly pointed
out to me in a story that I’m using as escape is annoying. And I don’t like
how everything is just instantly ok. The male character can do something
horrible and then go and have sex, the woman, and she just forgets it, like it
never happened.”

I found that readers, even when they were aware of the double sexual
standard, the body image issues, the similarities to pornography and the near rape
scenes, still enjoyed reading the stories and would continue to read the paranormal romance novels. The happy ending and love played an integral part of keeping the reader involved in the story, but they were often bothered by the issues listed above. And most readers had read hundreds of books and had branched out to paranormal, looking for a new edge, much like viewers of pornography do (Dines 2010, Jensen 2007, Paul 2005). Even though all readers who were in relationships stated that they were happy in those relationships, they still wanted an escape from real life. However, I argue, they are escaping into a world that promotes domination over women.

In paranormal romance novels, women may appear to have some power and even appear to be on equal footing with the hero of the story, but when it comes to the sexual relationship, the heroine is often unsure, uncomfortable or dominated, as shown in the content analysis. The hero is described as predatory, dangerous and even brutal. The heroine is docile, submissive, and sometimes frightened. She is described as sexually satisfied, but emotionally unfulfilled, and only the love of the hero can completely fulfill her. It is her role to teach the hero to emotionally satisfy her and others he has relationships with, and it is the hero’s role to teach the heroine to sexually satisfy the hero. The sex that she experiences with the hero is often like nothing she has ever experienced (if she has ever had sex) and offers a sexual awakening that she is allowed to explore only with the hero. The heroine is often young, naïve and knows little about her own sexual desires until the hero teaches them to her.
Pornography is mentioned in paranormal romance novels, particularly the Gena Showalter *Lords of the Underworld* series. The men watch porn together or it plays in the background as static noise. It is a red flag to me when pornography is mentioned frequently and openly in the story. This means that the author feels it is acceptable and normal for men to watch pornography and learn from pornography. Readers receive the message that doing so is “typical male behavior.” We also see women in the stories accepting this behavior and being loved by the hero. Therefore, readers also learn to accept that “boys will be boys” and it is our job to sexually satisfy them and teach them open them emotionally. As Skin Diamond said: “I’m here to please, aren’t I?”

Androsexism also appears to be a predominant theme in paranormal romance novels. Androsexism, as defined by Fransico Valdes (1995:9) in Queers, Sissies, Dykes, and Tomboys: Deconstructing the Conflation of “Sex,” “Gender,” and “Sexual Orientation,” in Euro-American Law and Society” is sexism that favors “male-identified concepts, ideals or concepts.” It reinforces an active/passive paradigm in which the male is the only active agent. It works to devalue the gender roles of females by assigning inferiority to women. As shown in the content analysis, the heroines are often defined by their male counterpart. They evolve sexually through him and only react to his actions. They must be told what to do sexually as they lack confidence and experience. They are not only sexually experienced but have often had limited interaction with other people, particularly with other women. If other women are in the story, they are typically considered the villain, younger than
the heroine so the heroine takes on more of a caregiver role than a true friendship or
the women have trouble maintaining relationships with one another. I argue that
paranormal romance novels also reinforce androsexism by defining the heroine’s role
as the passive and naïve character and the hero as the sexually experienced and
dominant character.

Young girls are reading these stories, as well as adult women. All of the
subjects interviewed were in their young teens when they began reading romance
novels. Of course the novels were not nearly as explicit as what they are now, but
many teen novels also have paranormal elements, (i.e Twilight) and from the research
here, that could be very dangerous for girls and boys who continue to grow up in a
male-dominated and pornographic-infiltrated society as the shift to adult paranormal
romance novels would be an easy one. I asked Brittany, 48, if she felt that teenagers
should be permitted to read the adult romance novels now and she said no. Brittany
felt that the size of the book could be intimidating to someone as young as eleven or
twelve, but I must say the Twilight books and the Harry Potter books were no longer
in length than any of the romance novels and these are some of the stories that eleven
and twelve year olds are reading. Boys at eleven are starting their descent into the
world of pornography, and so are girls, yet the element of love and submission and
the lack of pictures, makes sexual aggression through romance novels available and
legal to them at all ages. Tellingly, while pornography creates an environment which
normalizes patriarchal domination of women’s sexuality (Dines 2010; Jensen 2007;
Paul 2007; Russell 1998) – which instructs men in rape myths that it is impossible to
rape a woman – correspondingly I find that paranormal romance novels teach women that it is perfectly acceptable for a man to force a woman into subordinate positions, dominate her sexually and treat her with violence and aggression all of which are indicators of rape and fall in love with their perpetrator.
Appendix I – Content Analysis of Novels

Table 1 *Twilight Memories*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heroine says no sexual advances made by the hero</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence or threat of violence against the heroine by the hero</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against a secondary male character</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indication of sexual abuse when heroine was held captive, but appears to be in control of sexuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heroine was sexually abused, virgin or n/a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to rape</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violence against a secondary female character</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploration of secondary female character’s sexual history and considered, slut, whore, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mention of female bringing out beast or wildness in hero</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roughly grabs, touches, etc. the heroine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildness in hero mentioned: predator, dangerous, brutal, violent, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extreme jealousy by hero</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlling/Trapping the heroine</td>
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<td>Heroine’s virtue questioned</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heroine changes hero, makes him care, calms him</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heroine is afraid of hero</td>
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Table 2 – *Burning Wild*

<table>
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<tr>
<td>References to rape</td>
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<td>Violence against a secondary female character</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mention of female bringing out beast or wildness in hero</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

82
Roughly grabs, touches, etc. the heroine .............................................. 60
Wildness in hero mentioned: predator, dangerous, brutal, violent, etc. .... 49
Extreme jealousy by hero ........................................................................ 6
Controlling/Trapping the heroine .......................................................... 45
Heroine's virtue questioned ................................................................. 6
Heroine changes hero, makes him care, calms him ............................ 2
Heroine is afraid of hero ........................................................................ 2

Table 3 – The Darkest Night

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<td>Violence or threat of violence against the heroine by the hero</td>
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<td>Violence against a secondary male character</td>
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<td>Heroine was sexually abused, virgin or n/a</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Heroine changes hero, makes him care, calms him</td>
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<td>Heroine is afraid of hero</td>
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Table 4 – Winter Born

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<td>Violence against a secondary male character</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine was sexually abused, virgin or n/a</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to rape</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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<td>Violence against a secondary female character</td>
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<td>Exploration of secondary female character's sexual history and considered, slut, whore, etc.</td>
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<td>Mention of female bringing out beast or wildness in hero</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roughly grabs, touches, etc. the heroine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heroine says no sexual advances made by the hero</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildness in hero mentioned: predator, dangerous, brutal, violent, etc.</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme jealously by hero</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling/Trapping the heroine</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine’s virtue questioned</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine changes hero, makes him care, calms him</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroine is afraid of hero</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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