



CREATE

Canterbury Research and Theses Environment

Canterbury Christ Church University's repository of research outputs

<http://create.canterbury.ac.uk>

Copyright © and Moral Rights for this thesis are retained by the author and/or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder/s. The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given e.g. Van Der Walt, Herman (2014) Practitioner psychologists' understandings of bondage / discipline, dominance / submission, sadomasochism (BDSM): shared or separate from those who practise it. D.Clin.Psych. thesis, Canterbury Christ Church University.

Contact: create.library@canterbury.ac.uk



HERMAN VAN DER WALT, BA Hons

MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECT

**PRACTITIONER PSYCHOLOGISTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF
BONDAGE/DISCIPLINE, DOMINANCE/SUBMISSION, SADOMASOCHISM
(BDSM): SHARED OR SEPARATE FROM THOSE WHO PRACTICE IT?**

SECTION A:

Motivations for engaging in

Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/submission, Sadomasochism (BDSM):

A literature review – Word Count: 5611

SECTION B:

Practitioner Psychologists' understandings of

Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/submission, Sadomasochism (BDSM):

shared or separate from those who practice it?

A Q methodological study – Word Count: 8048

SECTION C:

Critical Appraisal: BDSM reflected – Word Count: 1721

TOTAL WORD COUNT: 15380

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Canterbury Christ Church University for the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology

SEPTEMBER 2014

Salomons Centre for Applied Psychology

Canterbury Christ Church University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and extend thank yous to:

All participants who generously gave their time and effort to participate in this study,

Dr Stuart Gibson and Dr Meg Barker for their valuable input,

Professor Steven Brown and Sabina Hulbert for advice on statistical analyses,

Kathy Chaney and library staff,

Deborah Chadwick,

Professor Margie Callanan,

And Professor Jan Burns, for being a constant on a winding, sometimes reluctant,

nevertheless formative path of my clinical psychology training.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION A: MOTIVATIONS FOR ENGAGING IN BONDAGE/DISCIPLINE, DOMINANCE/SUBMISSION, SADOMASOCHISM (BDSM): A LITERATURE REVIEW

	<i>Pg</i>
Abstract	1
Introduction	2
Prevalence	4
General aim and review structure	4
Search strategy	5
Existing reviews of the literature	
Weinberg (1987, 1994, 2006)	5
Williams (2006)	7
Guidroz (2008)	8
Powls & Davies (2012)	8
Pitagora (2013)	9
Motivations for engaging in BDSM	10
Normative	10
Learned behaviour	14
Psychopathology	15
Transgressive and transformative	18
Transgressive	19
Transformative	20
General findings	22
Future research	23
Reference list	24

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

SECTION B: PRACTITIONER PSYCHOLOGISTS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF BONDAGE/DISCIPLINE, DOMINANCE/SUBMISSION, SADMASOCHISM (BDSM): SHARED OR SEPARATE FROM THOSE WHO PRACTISE IT? A Q-METHODOLOGICAL STUDY

	<i>Pg</i>
Abstract	28
Definition	30
Summary of selected research	
Prevalence	31
Understandings of BDSM	31
Rationale for the current study	33
Method	
Q methodology	36
Design	
Constructing the Q set	36
Internet-mediated Q sorting	37
Procedure	38
Recruitment strategy	39
Practitioner psychologists	39
BDSM practitioners	40
Data analyses	40
Results	42
Participants	42
Data analyses	43
Practitioner psychologists (PP)	45
PP Component 1 – <i>Pluralistic powerful pleasure</i>	47
PP Component 2 – <i>Inexplicable transcendence</i>	49
<i>vs intra-psychic struggles</i>	
PP Component 3 – <i>Dissidence vs perplexing pleasure</i>	50

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

	<i>Pg</i>
BDSM practitioners	51
BDSM Component 1 – <i>Pluralistic powerful pleasure</i>	53
BDSM Component 2 – <i>Intra-psychic sanctity vs powerful pleasure</i>	55
BDSM Component 3 – <i>Hallowed habituation vs psychic retreat</i>	57
Discussion	59
Limitations	61
Implications for clinical psychology	63
Directions for future research	65
Conclusion	66
Reference list	67

SECTION C: CRITICAL APPRAISAL – BDSM REFLECTED

1. What research skills have you learned; what research abilities have you developed from undertaking this project; and what do you think you need to learn further?	72
2. If you were able to do this project again, what would you do differently and why?	75
3. Clinically, as a consequence of doing this study, would you do anything differently and why?	76
4. If you were to undertake further research in this area what would that research project seek to answer and how would you go about doing it?	77
Reference list	79

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

SECTION D: APPENDICES

	<i>Pg</i>
Appendix A1: Additional information on existing literature reviews	80
Appendix A2: Additional information on sampling, measures and data analyses	81
Appendix A3: Understandings of BDSM as described in respective articles	84
Appendix B1: Research proposal review panel decision	85
Appendix B2: Ethics approval, Salomons Ethics Panel	86
Appendix B3: Statements /Q set	87
Appendix B4: Pilot study	89
Appendix B5: Recruitment letter	90
Appendix B6: Information sheet	91
Appendix B7: Post-sorting questionnaire	93
Appendix B8: Practitioner psychologists questionnaire	94
Appendix B9: BDSM practitioners questionnaire	95
Appendix B10: Participant coding	96
Appendix B11: Personal correspondence with Professor Steven Brown	97
Appendix B12: Factor arrays – practitioner psychologists	99
Appendix B13: Factor arrays – BDSM practitioners	100
Appendix B14: Example ‘crib sheet’	101
Appendix B15: Journal submission guidelines	102

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

List of tables

<i>Table:</i>	<i>Pg</i>
1. Demographical characteristics of practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners	42
2. Additional information for practitioner psychologists	45
3. Practitioner psychologists - components, eigenvalues and variance generated by PCA	46
4. Additional information for BDSM practitioners	52
5. BDSM practitioners - components, eigenvalues and variance generated by PCA	52

List of figures

<i>Figure:</i>	
1. The sorting distribution	38
2. Practitioner psychologists - scree plot	46
3. BDSM practitioners - scree plot	53

SECTION A

**Motivations for engaging in
Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/submission, Sadomasochism (BDSM):
A literature review**

Word Count: 5611

Abstract

The scholarly literature on Bondage, Discipline, Dominance, Submission, Sadism and Masochism (BDSM) has increased considerably in past four decades. The aim of the current review was to provide an account of people's motivations for engaging in BDSM. The review, more specifically, sought to answer the question: *Why do people engage in BDSM?* Although the literature on BDSM has been reviewed previously, no review has focused exclusively on people's motivations for engaging in BDSM. Systematic searches of three databases, PsycINFO, Cochrane and Web of Science, were conducted. Seven existing literature reviews and nine empirical studies relating to the review question were identified for inclusion in the current review.

Motivations for engaging in BDSM were found to be varied and wide-ranging. Four primary narratives were identified, namely: normative, learned behaviour, pathological and transgressive/transformative. Normative motivations positioned BDSM as a variation or extension of normative sexuality, with most people engaging in BDSM because they found it pleasurable, it increased intimacy or it simply formed part of their identity. Others engaged in BDSM because it was a form of learned behaviour which developed either through conditioning or a process of socialisation. Connotations with psychopathology remain evident in current editions of the major psychiatric nosologies. For a small minority of participants, BDSM interests were associated with abuse in childhood, which may be read as relating to psychological processes or potentially indicative of psychopathology. Another major motivating factor for engaging in BDSM was power, with BDSM as a transgressive practice with subversive potential, and a transformative practice with utopian, therapeutic and transcendental potential.

Motivations for engaging in

Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/Submission, Sadomasochism (BDSM):

A literature review

Introduction

Sadomasochism is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon. The term 'sadomasochism' dates back to Sigmund Freud's publication in 1905 of *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex* (Freud, 1905/1953). Such practices, however, have a far longer history and over time sadomasochism has developed into a distinct subculture (Sisson, 2005). In the past century, the phenomenon has attracted interest from scholars of several disciplines who have variously contributed to an evolving conceptualisation of sadomasochism.

In the academic literature, broad distinctions may be made between conceptualisations of sadomasochism in psychoanalytic, forensic and sociological or social psychological terms. In the psychoanalytic literature, sadomasochism tends to be conceptualised as a 'perversion'; a psychoanalytic construct which extends beyond the notion of sexual deviation from the procreative norm, to that of character structure or mode of object-relatedness in defence against psychic pain (Stein, 2005). Scholars of the forensic sciences mainly study non-consensual forms of sadomasochism; see Fedoroff (2008) for a literature review. Meanwhile, scholars of a sociological or social psychological orientation are generally concerned with sadomasochism as a sociological phenomenon; a set of consensual sexual practices, a sexual identity, sexuality, lifestyle, a form of deviant leisure and/or a subculture. The focus of the current review is on the latter, namely consensual sadomasochism in psychosexual terms.

Consensual sadomasochism is variously termed SM, S&M, BDSM and Leather, with some variation in meaning depending on the context. The compound acronym 'BDSM' is most commonly used among those who practise consensual sadomasochism (Williams, 2006) and reflects the diversity of practices involved. BDSM stands for bondage and discipline (B&D), dominance and submission (D/s) and sadomasochism (SM or S&M); this more encompassing term will be used henceforth.

There is no single, universally accepted definition for BDSM (Powls & Davies, 2012). It represents a wide range of behaviours, and the experience and meaning thereof differs among practitioners (Williams, 2006). The publication in 1969 of anthropologist Paul Gebhard's seminal article *Fetishism and Sadomasochism* (Gebhard, 1969) introduced a broadened perspective on BDSM and represented a significant departure from prior, individualised conceptualisations of BDSM as 'deviant' in much of the psychiatric and psychoanalytic literature. BDSM is consensual by definition; the pronouncement 'safe, sane and consensual' is widely accepted among BDSM communities as the premise of BDSM practice (Pitagora, 2013). The consensual nature of BDSM distinguishes BDSM from sexual sadism and assault. Taylor and Ussher (2001), from interviews with 24 self-identified sadomasochists, generated a four-factor definition of BDSM which encompasses consensuality, unequal balance of power, sexual arousal and compatibility of definition:

SM is best understood as comprising those behaviours which are characterised by a contrived, often symbolic, unequal distribution of power involving the giving and/or receiving of physical and/or psychological stimulation. It often involves acts which would generally be considered as 'painful' and/or humiliating or subjugating,

but which are consensual and for the purpose of sexual arousal, and are understood by the participant to be SM. (Taylor & Ussher, 2001, p. 301).

Prevalence

Accurate estimation of the prevalence of BDSM practitioners is complicated by the concealed, often secretive nature of BDSM subculture. In a major national survey on sexual behaviour in the United States of America (USA), 11% of women ($n = 1406$) and 14% of men ($n = 1336$) surveyed reported having engaged in SM and 11% of both men and women reported having engaged in bondage/dominance (Janus & Janus, 1993). Kleinplatz and Moser (2006) have proposed a similar prevalence estimate of 10% of the general population, based on their experience of researching BDSM in the USA. A large national survey in Australia yielded lower figures, with 2.2% of men and 1.3% of women who had been sexually active in the previous year reporting BDSM activity (Richters, De Visser, Rissel, Grulich, & Smith, 2008). In sexual fantasy, themes of BDSM have been found to be fairly common, with some studies reporting prevalence in excess of 60% (Powls & Davies, 2012).

General aim and review structure

The primary objective of the current review is to evaluate the scholarly literature to date in terms of people's motivations for engaging in BDSM. The aim of this review, more specifically, is to answer the question: '*Why do people engage in BDSM?*'. The review strategy is described, followed by a summary of existing reviews of the literature on BDSM and the findings of each in relation to the current review question. In the main part of the review, people's motivations for engaging in BDSM are discussed. The review concludes with a summary of findings and considerations for future research.

Search strategy

Systematic searches of the literature on BDSM were conducted via three electronic databases, PsycINFO, Cochrane and Web of Science. Criteria were applied as follows, with results from PsycINFO in brackets:

- (i) Search terms applied: Sadomasochism, BDSM, sadism, masochism. An 'auto-explode' function was used to include related terms (1327),
- (ii) Date limit: no lower date limit, through December 2013 (1294),
- (iii) Inclusion criteria: English language, adult population, peer-reviewed publications (202),
- (iv) Exclusion criteria: Forensic/non-consensual forms of sadomasochism, psychoanalytic conceptualisations of sadomasochism unrelated to sexuality¹.

Article titles and abstracts were studied to determine relevance to the current review, with the review question '*Why do people engage in BDSM?*' in mind. Reference lists of retained articles were also cross-checked. In total, 16 articles were retained, including seven existing reviews and nine empirical studies relating to the review question.

Existing reviews of literature

A brief summary of the existing seven literature reviews follows, with particular reference to findings on why people engage in BDSM. Thomas Weinberg (1987, 1994, 2006) has reviewed the research in some detail, while recent reviews have drawn on the literature more generally. Further information on each review is provided in Appendix A1.

¹ The current review reads the psychoanalytic construct of sadomasochism, a character structure or mode of object-relatedness in defence against psychic pain (Stein, 2005), as distinct from BDSM, a set of sexual practices, sexual identity and/or subcultural phenomenon.

Weinberg (1987, 1994, 2006)

Weinberg has reviewed research into BDSM in the sociological and social psychological sciences in each of the previous three decades. His most recent review (Weinberg, 2006) was published in a special edition of the *Journal of Homosexuality* devoted to BDSM, adding to those published previously (1994, 1987). Weinberg followed a similar structure for each: an empirical review of the sociological and social psychological literature on BDSM, followed by summation of the definition and characterisation of BDSM. Weinberg recognised early on the importance of community-based definitions in understanding people's motivations for engaging in BDSM: "...if we wish to understand S&M motivations and behaviour, we must look to the definitions provided by these people rather than attempt to impose our own preconceived notions upon this activity" (Weinberg, 1987, p. 58).

Research into BDSM had progressed to become methodologically more varied, from individual, clinical case studies of early writers, to larger scale survey and questionnaire studies, content analyses, ethnographic studies and critical essays, amongst others. Weinberg's first review was limited to research from the United States of America (USA) only, however subsequent reviews included research that had started to emerge internationally, making cross-cultural analyses possible. Over the years, participant samples increased in size and diversity; earlier studies were mainly of gay men on the 'leathersex' scene and submissive, heterosexual men who utilised the services of professional dominatrices. A resulting assumption that fewer women than men engaged in BDSM was later found to be inaccurate.

Consistent with an understanding of BDSM as a sociological phenomenon rather than individually-located 'deviance', Weinberg was less concerned with why people engaged in BDSM, and more with the social conditions under which the phenomenon occurred. Examples of the latter included societies in which dominance-submission relationships were culturally embedded and aggression was socially valued, and the unequal distribution of power between social categories (e.g. gender and social class) which could make the temporary illusion of its reversal erotically stimulating (Weinberg, 1987). While not discussed separately, Weinberg's summary of the characteristics of BDSM included some motivations for engaging in BDSM, including: the recreational and play-like quality of BDSM offered a means of temporarily escaping real-world pressures; and fantasy, role play and the scripting of scenes permitted safe exploration of roles and scenarios otherwise not possible, or considered taboo in secular society (Weinberg, 2006).

Williams (2006)

In an overview primarily aimed at clinicians unfamiliar with BDSM, Williams (2006) sought to bridge an apparent gap in the literature on BDSM between research conducted from the experience-distant and direct-experience perspectives. He discussed BDSM as a form of 'serious leisure'. In contrast with casual leisure, which was immediately rewarding and required little or no training to enjoy, qualities of serious leisure included: being career-like with various stages; requiring considerable effort and perseverance based on acquired knowledge, training or skill and providing lasting reward such as belonging or self-actualisation. While this part-empirical, part-conceptual review serves the function of a useful introduction to BDSM, with a section on assessment of 'extreme cases' and questions

clinicians may wish to consider, no distinction is made between the direct-experience and experience-distant perspectives.

Guidroz (2008)

Guidroz's (2008) review was structured as a 'frequently asked questions' of BDSM, addressing common themes such as definition, practitioner characteristics and their roles. Guidroz discussed briefly a few possible benefits of BDSM, which included BDSM being pleasurable and erotic, that it provided emotional and sexual intensity and that BDSM scenes offered a therapeutic-like space where issues could be explored safely. Additionally, she also discussed commercial BDSM.

Powls & Davies (2012)

In their descriptive review, Powls and Davies (2012) evaluated the psychological well-being of BDSM practitioners and found psychiatric and psychoanalytic explanations of BDSM to be inconsistent with empirical evidence. A thematic analysis of the results of their literature search yielded the following themes: prevalence, initial interest, childhood, mental health services, the role of pain, positive functions and social and psychological functioning. The authors concluded that prevalence rates suggested BDSM practitioners could not be considered a 'deviant minority', that developmentally, the relatively mature age of initial interest in BDSM coupled with the role of social and cultural factors undermined the traditional psychoanalytic understanding of BDSM as an individually-located phenomenon rooted in childhood, and that for the majority, interest in BDSM did not stem from childhood abuse. The evidence suggested that BDSM practitioners generally enjoyed comparatively good psychological well-being and social functioning.

BDSM served various positive functions, which may also be read as motivational for engaging in BDSM. These functions included BDSM as: pleasurable, in the form of a 'natural high' or altered states of consciousness; recreational, in form of play or thrill-seeking type activities; and therapeutic, as having healing properties and an opportunity for self-exploration. BDSM afforded variety in sex, thereby preventing sex from becoming routine and monotonous, and provided greater satisfaction from sexual encounters. Although Powlis and Davies acknowledge, by excluding social and anthropological literature from their review, an intentional bias towards a nomothetic, individualised understanding of BDSM, this appears contradictory to their recognition of BDSM as a sociological phenomenon.

Pitagora (2013)

The primary focus of Pitagora's (2013) conceptual review was on the complex notion of consent in sexual interactions. Pitagora contrasted tacit agreements of consent generally accepted in normative sexualities and an associated risk of coercion, with an emphasis in BDSM on the explicit negotiation of consent. This review did not include motivations for engagement in BDSM. Pitagora failed to include a search strategy for this review and its scope was therefore unclear.

Although some of the aforementioned reviews included references to positive functions and benefits of BDSM, the question of people's motivation for engaging in BDSM has not been reviewed separately. Moreover, none of the studies included in the current review have been reviewed in any detail. The remainder of the current review deals with people's motivations for engaging in BDSM and concludes with general findings and possible avenues for future research.

Motivations for engaging in BDSM

Consistent with the complex nature of BDSM, a wide range of motivations for engaging in BDSM have been documented in the scholarly literature. Four dominant narratives were identified, namely: (i) normative; (ii) learned behaviour, (iii) psychopathology and (iv) transgressive and transformative. Further information on sampling, measures and data analyses of each study is provided in Appendix B2, while the narratives and studies in which they appear are tabled in Appendix B3.

Normative

Motivations people have offered for engaging in BDSM, as well as some of the characteristic features of BDSM, either directly contend or indirectly imply that BDSM is an extension of normative sexuality. These include assertions that BDSM is an intrinsic part of the self, that it is a variation of pluralistic, normative sexuality, that it promotes intimacy and bonding, provides a sense of identity and belonging, that it is pleasurable and fun, that it offers variety in sexual interactions and prevents monotony, and even that it is of evolutionary importance.

Yost and Hunter (2012) examined the narrative accounts of people's initial interest in BDSM sexuality and whether they regarded their desires as an essential part of their selves, similar to most Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual (LGBT) individuals. A questionnaire with an open-ended item relating to initial attraction to BDSM was completed by 144 women and 128 men. Thematic analysis of the resulting data generated two mutually exclusive explanations for initial interest in BDSM, namely: *BDSM as an intrinsic part of the self*, and *BDSM interests developed because of external influences*. A greater proportion of

all study participants (43.4%) identified with BDSM being intrinsically motivated, while just over a third (35.3%) considered their interests to be externally motivated. The remaining participants (21.3%) cited neither intrinsic self nor external influences, and instead described what they found attractive about BDSM. Among submissively-oriented participants only, men were more likely than women to cite intrinsic motivation for their interest in BDSM. Participants' explanations included concrete statements that their core sense of self included a BDSM identity, and an understanding of BDSM interests being “almost inexplicable, not in need of explanation because it was simply who they were” (Yost & Hunter, 2012, p. 250).

The notion of BDSM as inexplicable corresponds with Taylor and Ussher's (2001) study. As introduced earlier, they interviewed 24 self-identified sadomasochists, including 14 men and 10 women, using open-ended, semi-structured questions, with the aim of determining how a group of sadomasochists defined and made sense of their own and others' sexuality. They subjected their data to discourse analysis and identified eight discursive constructions of BDSM sexualities, one of which was *BDSM as inexplicable*. The understanding of BDSM as inexplicable may arguably be read as suggestive of an underlying true essence which evades explanation, perhaps precisely because there is no particular explanation.

Similarly, Langdrige and Butt (2004), in their hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of text appearing on BDSM websites, found that text concerning the potential causes of BDSM was scarce. They hypothesised that this perhaps represented an active refusal to articulate a discourse of causality. Instead, the discourse contended that BDSM was a variation of normative sexuality. Using three separate search engines and a wide

range of BDSM search terms, they conducted a search of the Internet with the view of identifying BDSM-related websites. Data collection was conducted over a two-year period. Their analysis revealed two main discursive themes, namely the *rejection of pathology* and *explicit negotiation of consent*. The *rejection of pathology* discourse was primarily aimed at challenging various perceived misconceptions of BDSM identities, including its association with childhood trauma and psychopathology. This discourse emphasised the extension, rather than the outright rejection, of normative sexuality. BDSM was positioned as a variation of a pluralistic, normative sexuality.

Some engage in BDSM for its potential to increase intimacy and bonding. The research team of Sagarin, Cutler, Cutler, Lawler-Sagarin, and Matuszewich (2009) examined people's physiological responses in relation to BDSM interaction and the effect on couple bonding. Their study involved various physiological measures and a psychological, self-report measure of relationship closeness. The study involved 58 sadomasochists (25 women and 33 men) of various sexual orientation, with different genders assuming BDSM roles in relatively equal numbers. Sagarin and colleagues found that during BDSM scenes, submissive participants experienced an increase in stress while dominant participants did not. The authors thought this difference to be associated with the dominant partner's role in exercising control during the scene, but acknowledged that the submissive partner could exercise ultimate control by using a 'safe-word' and stopping the scene. After scenes had ended, both dominant and submissive participants who reported that their scenes had gone well experienced increases in relationship closeness and decreases in stress. Among participants whose scenes had not gone well, the effect on relationship closeness was varied, leading the authors to conclude that the effect of scene quality on relationship

closeness was likely moderated by other factors, such as length of relationship. Sagarin and colleagues remarked on the phenomenon of 'aftercare' which generally followed a scene: behaviours which expressed physical and emotional care of a scene partner. These caring behaviours, they said, emphasised BDSM practitioners' concern "for the well-being and positive experience of their scene partners and the positive relationship context in which the scenes occur" (Sagarin et al., 2009, p.196).

The findings of Sagarin and colleagues are consistent with those of Newmahr (2008), who remarked that BDSM "created and constituted feelings of intimacy" (p. 634). Newmahr, in an ethnographic study conducted over the course of four years, described her socialisation into a BDSM community. While she reported experience of intimacy on an interpersonal level, she also observed intimacy at a community level. Members of the BDSM community she joined had in common experiences of having been outsiders throughout their lives, having been marginalised due to 'unfavourable difference', which for some had resulted in loneliness. Newmahr noted that difference, rather than sadist or masochist identities, was the unifying factor among members of this particular community. BDSM community offered a sense of belonging and acceptance, with various members referring to it as 'home'.

Other motivations which may be considered consistent with a normative sexuality include variety in sex, pleasure and a form of safer sex. Beckmann (2001), in another ethnographic study, identified various motivations for the practise of BDSM. She conducted unstructured, non-directive interviews with 16 BDSM practitioners, recruited over the course of one year via snowballing. The first, *BDSM as an alternative to 'normal genital sexuality'*, emphasised the need for variety in sex, of increasing sexual enjoyment and also

better communication. Taylor and Ussher (2001) in their study also identified *BDSM as pleasure*, with consensus among participants that BDSM was fun. Much of the language used by people who practised BDSM reflected this theme, common terms being 'playmates', 'playroom', 'sex toys' and 'sex games'. Beckmann's study also revealed, in the context of the emergence in the 80s of HIV/AIDS, the motivation of *BDSM as 'safer sex'*. BDSM was generally considered a form of safer sex as it was not genitally focused and did not necessarily involve penetrative sex.

Learned behaviour

BDSM has been described as a form of learned behaviour, either through socialisation or through conditioning. In a sociological definition of BDSM, sadism and masochism are defined as “sociological phenomena, dependent on meanings which are culturally produced, learnt and reinforced by participation in sadomasochistic subculture” (Weinberg, 2006, p. 19). Newmahr's (2008) socialisation into a BDSM community accords with this definition, and lead her to conclude that one could “indeed learn to become a sadomasochist” (p. 639). She described socialisation into BDSM community as a formal process. A BDSM organisation hosted weekly meetings for newcomers to the scene, with demonstrations of BDSM techniques, lessons on etiquette and safety, and discussions about the importance of consent.

In Yost and Hunter's (2012) study into people's initial interest in BDSM, approximately 35.3% of participants reported that they believed their BDSM interest to be motivated by external influences. Some had been introduced to BDSM by a partner or a friend, while other sources included media such as pornography. A small number of participants cited history of sexual abuse as the origin of their interest in BDSM. Submissive

women were marginally more likely than submissive men to cite external influences as motivation for their initial interest in BDSM. In what the authors refer to as 'socialised essentialism', some participants described realisation of their 'true nature' subsequent to initial introduction to BDSM by a partner. This account was again more common among women than men, the majority of which were of submissive orientation. These external influences may be read as sources of learned behaviour.

Another discourse among participants of Taylor and Ussher's (2001) study was *BDSM as learned behaviour*; an understanding of interest in BDSM as the result of learnt association, sometimes dating back to childhood, and as having some neuro-physiological element where pain and arousal became inseparably paired. This is therefore suggestive of a form of conditioning, rather than social learning.

Psychopathology

Sexual science developed from the forensic and psychiatric disciplines, which were primarily concerned with identifying and defining forms of behaviour and disease considered 'deviant' or criminal. The publication in 1886 of forensic psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Krafft-Ebing, 1886/1965) proved highly influential, and introduced the terms 'sadism' and 'masochism' into the lexicon. *Psychopathia Sexualis*, originally intended as a manual for psychiatrists undertaking court work, "conferred typology, aetiology and pathology on previously unremarkable sexual behaviours and desires" (Sisson, 2005, p. 150). Although Krafft-Ebing acknowledged similarities with the 'horseplay', and thereby a continuum of sexuality, he maintained that sadism and masochism were perversions with pathological basis. He considered sadism and masochism

gendered phenomena; sadism the active and aggressive, or masculine form, and masochism the passive and defensive, or feminine form.

Freud's (1905/1953) preference for the term 'sodomasochism' reflected his view that sadism and masochism were not separate but complimentary aspects of a single condition. Freud, like Krafft-Ebing, considered sadism and masochism perversions; he believed sadism to "correspond to an aggressive component of the sexual instinct which [had] become independent and exaggerated and [had] been brought to the foreground by displacement" (Freud, 1938, p. 569), and masochism to be "nothing but a continuation of sadism directed at one's own person in which the latter at first [took] the place of the sexual object" (Freud, 1938, p. 570).

Connotations of psychopathology remained evident in current editions of the major psychiatric nosologies; the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V, American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10; World Health Organisation [WHO], 1992). The psychiatric classification of sexual sadism and masochism as 'paraphilias' have been criticised extensively for being based on social convention rather than a foundation of empirical evidence (Kleinplatz & Moser, 2005).

Some of the contemporary research included references to BDSM as potentially indicative of psychopathology or resulting from prior sexual abuse. In the study of Yost and Hunter (2012), a small minority of participants related their interest in BDSM to prior sexual abuse. This association corresponds with a minority view in Taylor and Ussher's (2001) study: the *BDSM as intra-psychic* theme, which linked BDSM to internal psychological processes, included associations of BDSM for a small minority with unhappy and/or abusive

childhoods. Closely related to the latter was the discursive theme *BDSM as pathology*, which recognised that for some people, BDSM practice could potentially be indicative of psychopathology. Most of Taylor and Ussher's participants knew of someone whose interest in BDSM had appeared unhealthy to them, because of behaviours perceived as too extreme or not adequately reflective of consensual interaction.

The association of BDSM interest with unhappy or abusive childhoods among Taylor and Ussher's participants was also the most commonly contested explanation. This corresponds with Langdrige and Butt's (2004) *rejection of pathology* theme, which was aimed at challenging perceived misconceptions of BDSM identities, including associations with childhood trauma and psychopathology. In a three-part study, Cross and Matheson (2006) examined four perspectives on BDSM. First, they sought to assess the validity of various theoretical perspectives of BDSM: the psychiatric/psychoanalytic view, which generally saw BDSM as symptomatic of psychopathology; a radical-feminist view which considered BDSM fundamentally misogynistic; and the 'escape-from-self' view which proposed that masochism provided a temporary escape from higher-level self-awareness. Participants were 93 self-identified BDSM practitioners recruited through online postings on BDSM-related bulletin boards and a non-BDSM control group comprising 61 individuals, also recruited online. Psychometric measures were used to assess the aforementioned perspectives on BDSM. In sum, none of the theoretical perspectives under investigation were supported by the resulting data. The second part of their study confirmed that virtual BDSM encounters adequately reflected 'real-life' BDSM interactions, and that virtual encounters could reliably be utilised for further investigation. In the third and final part of their study, Cross and Matheson sought to assess the role and importance of power in

BDSM interactions. They observed virtual BDSM encounters in online 'chat-rooms' and conducted thematic analyses of the text exchanges. The results revealed the creation and maintenance of an illusory power differential, which was consistent with BDSM practitioners' description of their practices as 'power-exchange'. The authors concluded that power was at the core of BDSM.

Transgressive and transformative

BDSM has been discussed in terms of power elsewhere in the literature. Bauer (2008) commented that BDSM possessed political potential, as it enabled those who practised it "to question cultural assumptions about power in general and sex and gender specifically" (p. 236). Bauer's grounded theory study comprised semi-structured interviews with 50 self-identified dykes, trans people and queers who practised BDSM, recruited in the United States and Western Europe through personal contacts and mailing lists. While Bauer's sample ranged in age from 20 to 60, and unlike most BDSM studies was varied in terms of socio-economic status and class, people from minority ethnic backgrounds, as in most other BDSM studies, remained underrepresented. Bauer noted that although a sampling bias might have occurred, the sample might equally be representative of a predominantly white 'dyke+ BDSM community'. Bauer described the potential for self-exploration through role-play, particularly in terms of gender and its intersection with age, class and sexual identity. Sexual role-play was an "embodied way of *understanding* (author's emphasis) an identity or a power dynamic ... [and] a means of acknowledging and respecting difference, both within themselves and interpersonally" (Bauer, 2008, p. 241). Bauer's participants could thereby feel connections across differences, a motivation for engagement

in BDSM reminiscent of findings on intimacy (Newmahr, 2008) and relationship closeness (Sagarin et al., 2009).

Transgressive

Bauer distinguished between transgressive and transformative practices in their analyses of anti-oppressive potentials and limits of BDSM practices. Transgressive practices were those which overemphasised certain stereotypes or broke certain sociocultural taboos in a way which sought subversive re-inscription, and in turn the dislocation, of dominant structures. Transgression of social class, for example, relied on class-based stereotyping; working class people were depicted as 'more real', 'more macho', or 'more violent' – reproducing rather than challenging or transforming such stereotypes. Transgression, however, was not without limits; the breaking of certain sociocultural taboos could generate unease among people who practised BDSM. Play which created racial hierarchies and rendered privileged 'whiteness' more visible was unsettling for Bauer's participants. Bauer concluded that gender and sexuality were highly visible and consciously negotiable, whereas race remained invisible and unexplored, and functioned as a non-transgressable, and likely non-transformable cultural taboo.

Bauer's findings on transgressive practices correspond with a number of other authors on the subject. Taylor and Ussher's (2001) *BDSM as dissidence* theme included an understanding of BDSM as "a celebration of perversity, of difference..." (p. 303); as contrary to conventional 'vanilla sex', which participants generally deemed conformist, uninteresting and unerotic. Additionally, the dissidence theme encompassed a more politically oriented understanding of BDSM as deliberately oppositional to the heteronormative categorisation of sex and sexuality, or patriarchal heterosexuality. A feminist discourse, voiced mainly by

female participants, regarded BDSM as “parodying sexual relations considered as traditionally subjugating, oppressive and exploitative of women” (p. 303). Similarly, the explicit negotiation of consent – a theme from Langdrige and Butt's (2004) analyses of web-based text – represented a threat to normative sexualities wherein consent was often implicitly assumed. Langdrige and Butt stated that BDSM “produces resistance as it makes visible previously invisible institutionalised power inequalities” (p. 48).

Transformative

Transformative practices were those which involved the creation of new meanings or held utopian and/or political potential. According to Bauer (2008), BDSM had transformative potential insofar as the exploration of gender and other identities generated subcultural skills which were transferable to participants' every-day and political lives. An example of subcultural skills, employed in a process of ‘queering gender’, was ‘recognition’: “an active vision, reinventing and reconstructing sex and gender through...queer knowledges and practices” (p. 243). Bauer's participants thought of their gender identities as composed of various parts, personas or nuances; gender-based BDSM play facilitated the integration of these diverse aspects into identity. The awareness and experience of intrapersonal diversity had positive implications for diversity at interpersonal and community level: “what interviewees describe as respecting, validating, valuing, and celebrating diversity in gender expressions on a community level is therefore a result of the transformative acts the BDSM space enables...” (p. 243).

BDSM has also been described as having therapeutic potential. Lindemann's (2011) research with professional dominatrices, or ‘pro-dommes’, that is, women who receive monetary compensation for physically and verbally dominating clients, revealed a discourse

of BDSM as therapeutic. Lindemann conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 66 female pro-dommes in New York City and San Francisco in the US, recruited through their Internet advertisements and snowballing. Participants described the therapeutic value of BDSM to their clients as “healthful alternatives to sexual repression, as atonement rituals, as mechanisms for gaining control over prior trauma, and (in the case of humiliation sessions) as processes through which clients experience psychological revitalisation through shame” (p. 157). Lindemann considered critically some implications of such a discourse, one being that it inadvertently pathologised those who sought BDSM from pro-dommes.

Another understanding which may be thought of as transformative is BDSM as transcendental. Langdrige and Butt's (2004) analyses of web-based text, as discussed earlier, revealed a discourse in favour of the extension of normative sexuality, with BDSM as a ‘kinky’ variation. This *rejection of pathology* theme also yielded an opposing discourse which, in an outright rejection of normative sexuality, positioned BDSM as a transgressive, oppositional identity. Instead of engaging in explanatory psycho-medical discourses, some devotees of BDSM invoked “a spiritual discourse of new primitivism ... and/or a historical (reminiscent) discourse of earlier less repressive times”. These types of discourses, according to the authors, were used in an attempt to ameliorate the sexual in BDSM practices, as a route into sexual citizenship.

Geoffrey Mains (1984) likened gay leather-men to ‘urban aboriginals’. Mains linked the social behaviour of the leather subculture to the tribal rites of indigenous societies, and introduced the then recently discovered chemical, endorphin, as a crucial component of BDSM. He argued that western society overemphasised the ‘rational mind’ at the expense

of other forms of consciousness, which were dismissed as psychotic or unproductive, while other cultures found healing in physical ritualistic behaviours.

Mains's account of BDSM has been replicated empirically. Participants in Taylor and Ussher's (2001) study spoke of BDSM practice producing a natural 'high', a heightened state of consciousness, and feelings of astuteness, enlightenment and being more alive. A distinction was made between highs of a spiritual nature and highs which had a physiological cause, such as adrenaline or endorphins. Associated with the physiological high was an understanding of BDSM as potentially addictive. A related motivation from Beckmann's (2001) study was *BDSM as a possibility to experience the transformative potentials of 'lived body'*, which included deep relaxation, release from tension and spiritual potential.

General findings

The aim of the current review of the scholarly literature on BDSM was to provide an account of people's motivations for engaging in BDSM. Although the literature on BDSM has been reviewed previously, no review has focused exclusively on people's motivations for engaging in BDSM. The current review found motivations for engaging in BDSM to be varied and wide-ranging. Four narratives were identified, namely: normative, learned behaviour, pathological and transgressive/transformative. Normative motivations positioned BDSM as a variation or extension of normative sexuality, with most people engaging in BDSM because they found it pleasurable, it increased intimacy or it simply formed part of their identity. Others engaged in BDSM because it was a form of learned behaviour which developed either through conditioning or a process of socialisation. For a small minority, BDSM interests were associated with abuse in childhood, which could be read as related to

psychological processes or potentially indicative of psychopathology. Another major motivating factor for engaging in BDSM was power, with BDSM as a transgressive practice with subversive potential, and a transformative practice with utopian, therapeutic and transcendental potential. The breadth and variety of people's motivations for engaging in BDSM is reflective of the complexity of the phenomenon.

Future research

Socialisation into BDSM subculture has been described as a formal process, where the knowledge and experience of existing members are passed down to newcomers. While the proliferation of social networking has made it easier for like-minded people to come together online, it has diminished the need for gatherings in community-based settings where socialisation typically occurs. A potential avenue for future research is the implications of modern-day social networking on traditional forms of socialisation into BDSM subculture, or BDSM as learned behaviour.

A contemporary body of literature on BDSM has grown significantly in the past four decades. While research with people who practice BDSM have broadened perspectives on BDSM, there is evidence of BDSM practitioners experiencing biased and culturally insensitive care from mental health professionals (Kolmes, Stock, & Moser, 2006), raising the question about their understanding of BDSM. Thus far, practitioner psychologists' understandings of BDSM have not been investigated. Do they share understandings similar to people who practice BDSM, or are there disparity between their understandings of BDSM?

Reference list

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Bauer, R. (2008). Transgressive and transformative gendered sexual practices and white privileges: The case of the Dyke/Trans BDSM communities. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 36 (3/4), 233-253.
- Beckmann, A. (2001). Deconstructing myths: The social construction of sadomasochism versus subjugated knowledges of practitioners of consensual SM. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 8(2): 66-95.
- Cross, P.A. & Matheson, K. (2006). Understanding sadomasochism: An empirical examination of four perspectives. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 50(2/3), 133-166.
- Fedoroff, J. P. (2008). Sadism, sadomasochism, sex, and violence. *Canadian journal of psychiatry. Revue canadienne de psychiatrie*, 53(10), 637-646.
- Freud, S. (1938). *The basic writings of Sigmund Freud*. (A.A. Brill, Trans.). New York: Modern Library.
- Freud, S. (1953). Three essays on sexuality. In J Strachey (Ed. & Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (pp. 135-230). London: Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1905)
- Gebhard, P. (1969). Fetishism and sadomasochism. In J. Masserman (Ed.), *Dynamics of deviant sexuality* (pp. 71-80). New York: Grune & Stratton.

- Guidroz, K. (2008). Are you top or bottom?: Social science answers for everyday questions about sadomasochism. *Sociology Compass*, 2(6), 1766-1782.
- Janus, S. S., & Janus, C. L. (1993). *The Janus report on sexual behavior*. Oxford, England: John Wiley & Sons.
- Kleinplatz, P., & Moser, C. A. (2006). *Sadomasochism: powerful pleasures*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.
- Kleinplatz, P., & Moser, C. (2005). Is S/M pathological? *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 6(3), 255–260.
- Kolmes, K., Stock, W. & Moser, C. (2006). *Investigating bias in psychotherapy with BDSM clients*. *Journal of Homosexuality* 50, 301-324.
- Krafft-Ebing, R. v. (1965). *Psychopathia sexualis*. (F.S. Klaff, Trans.) New York: Stein & Day.
(Original work published 1886)
- Langdridge, D., & Butt, T. (2004). A hermeneutic phenomenological investigation of the construction of sadomasochistic identities. *Sexualities*, 7(1), 31–53.
- Lindemann, D. (2011). BDSM as therapy? *Sexualities*, 14(2), 151–172.
- Mains, G. (1984). *Urban aboriginals: A celebration of leathersexuality*. Los Angeles: Daedalus Publishing.
- Newmahr, S. (2008). Becoming a sadomasochist: Integrating self and other in ethnographic analysis. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 37(5), 619-643.

- Pitagora, D. (2013). Consent vs coercion: BDSM interactions highlight a fine but immutable line. *The New School Psychology Bulletin*, 10(1), 27-36.
- Powls, J., & Davies, J. (2012). A descriptive review of research relating to sadomasochism: considerations for clinical practice. *Deviant Behavior*, 33(3), 223–234.
- Richters, J., De Visser, R. O., Rissel, C. E., Grulich, A. E., & Smith, A. M. A. (2008). Demographic and psychosocial features of participants in bondage and discipline, sadomasochism or dominance and submission (BDSM): Data from a national survey. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 5(7), 1660–1668.
- Sagarin, B. J., Cutler, B., Cutler, N., Lawler-Sagarin, K. a, & Matuszewich, L. (2009). Hormonal changes and couple bonding in consensual sadomasochistic activity. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 38(2), 186–200.
- Sisson, K. (2005). The cultural formation of S/M: History and analysis. *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 6(3), 147–162.
- Stein, R. (2005). Why perversion? False love and the perverse pact. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 86, 775–799.
- Taylor, G. W., & Ussher, J. M. (2001). Making sense of S&M: A discourse analytic account. *Sexualities*, 4(3), 293–314.
- Weinberg, T. S. (1987). Sadomasochism in the United States: A review of recent sociological literature. *Journal of Sex Research*, 23(1), 50–69.

- Weinberg, T.S. (1994). Research in sadomasochism: A review of sociological and social psychological literature. *Annual Review of Sex Research* *V*, 257–277.
- Weinberg, T. S. (2006). Sadomasochism and the social sciences: A review of the sociological and social psychological literature. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *50*(2-3), 17–40.
- Williams, D. J. (2006). Different (painful!) strokes for different folks: A general overview of sexual sadomasochism (SM) and its diversity. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity*, *13*(4), 333–346.
- World Health Organisation. (1992). *ICD-10: International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems (10th ed.)*. New York, NY: Author
- Yost, M. R., & Hunter, L. E. (2012). BDSM practitioners' understandings of their initial attraction to BDSM sexuality: essentialist and constructionist narratives. *Psychology & Sexuality*, *3*(3), 244–259.

SECTION B

**Practitioner Psychologists' understandings of
Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/submission, Sadomasochism (BDSM):
shared or separate from those who practice it?**

A Q methodological study

Word Count: 8048

Abstract

Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/submission, Sadomasochism (BDSM) is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon. Historically, BDSM has been pathologised, however a contemporary body of literature has revealed understandings of BDSM from the perspectives of those who practice it.

The aim of the current study was to determine how existing understandings of BDSM were reflected in subjective understanding of BDSM of practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners. A Q methodological study was conducted online, involving 40 practitioner psychologists and 40 BDSM practitioners. Practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners shared comparable consensus understandings of BDSM as primarily about power and pleasure.

Despite the outcome, practitioner psychologists did not consider themselves particularly knowledgeable on the subject, which may have implications for clinical practice. While there may be a case for raising awareness of BDSM further among practitioner psychologists, perhaps an issue in psychology more generally, is comfortably and confidently talking about sex and sexualities.

Keywords: BDSM, Sadomasochism, sexualities, psychologists

**Practitioner psychologists' understanding of
Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/submission, Sadomasochism (BDSM):
shared or separate from those who practice it?
A Q methodological study**

If I take you from behind

Push myself into your mind

When you least expect it

Will you try and reject it?

If I'm in charge and treat you like a child

Will you let yourself go wild

Let my mouth go where it wants to?

Give it up, do as I say

Give it up and let me have my way

I'll give you love, I'll hit you like a truck

I'll give you love, I'll teach you how to ...

(from *Erotica* by Madonna, 1991)

The cultural visibility of sadomasochism has increased considerably in the past three decades. The mainstreaming of 'kink' (Weiss, 2006) is evident in representations of BDSM in advertisements of major brands such as *Ikea* and *Diesel*, in Hollywood films such as *Secretary* (2002), in popular music such as Madonna's *Erotica* (1991) and Rihanna's *S&M* (2011) and in literature such as E.L. James's hugely popular *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011).

Definition

Consensual sadomasochism and its various related practices are collectively known as BDSM, a term which reflects the diversity of the phenomenon (Williams, 2006). The compound acronym 'BDSM' stands for Bondage and Discipline (B&D), Dominance and submission (D/s)² and Sadomasochism (SM or S&M); this more encompassing term will be used henceforth.

BDSM is consensual by definition; the pronouncement 'safe, sane and consensual' is widely accepted among BDSM communities as the premise of BDSM practice, however, some prefer the maxim 'Risk Aware Consensual Kink' (RACK) due to concerns that use of the word 'sane' propagates negative stereotypes of BDSM (Pitagora, 2013). Consent, often explicitly negotiated, differentiates BDSM from pathological acts of violence and coercive abuse. Taylor and Ussher (2001), from interviews with 24 self-identified sadomasochists, generated a four-factor definition of BDSM which encompasses consensuality, unequal balance of power, sexual arousal and compatibility of definition:

SM is best understood as comprising those behaviours which are characterised by a contrived, often symbolic, unequal distribution of power involving the giving and/or receiving of physical and/or psychological stimulation. It often involves acts which would generally be considered as 'painful' and/or humiliating or subjugating, but which are consensual and for the purpose of sexual arousal, and are understood by the participant to be SM. (p. 301)

² Capitalisation is commonly used by members of the BDSM community to denote power differentials in BDSM relationships, e.g. Dom/sub, Master/slave.

Summary of selected literature

Prevalence

Accurate estimation of the prevalence of people who engage in BDSM is complicated by the concealed, often secretive nature of BDSM subculture. In a major national survey on sexual behaviour in the United States of America (USA), 11% of women and 14% of men surveyed reported having engaged in S/M and 11% of both men and women reported having engaged in bondage/dominance (Janus & Janus, 1993). Based on extensive experience of researching BDSM in the USA, a similar estimate of 10% of the general population has been proposed by Kleinplatz and Moser (2006). In sexual fantasy, themes of BDSM have been found to be fairly common, with some studies reporting a prevalence rate of up to 60% (Powls & Davies, 2012).

Understandings of BDSM

Historically, BDSM has been considered a form of psychopathology. Pathological connotations remain evident in current editions of the major psychiatric taxonomies, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM V, American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10; World Health Organisation [WHO], 1992), wherein sexual sadism and masochism may be categorised as 'paraphilic disorders'. In psychoanalytic terms, BDSM tends to be conceptualised as a sexual perversion originating in childhood (Powls & Davies, 2012). Psychiatric classifications and psychoanalytic theories have been criticised extensively for being based on social convention rather than a foundation of empirical evidence (Kleinplatz & Moser, 2005). Moreover, studies into the psychological wellbeing of people who engage

in BDSM have found no evidence for psychopathology (Connolly, 2006; Richters, De Visser, Rissel, Grulich, & Smith, 2008). To the contrary, one study found a sample of BDSM practitioners to have “favourable psychological characteristics” compared to a control group (Wismeijer & van Assen, 2013). Nicholls (2006) pointed out that while unusual sexual practices may be abnormal in a statistical sense, they are “pathologically neutral” and therefore “no more inherently healthy or unhealthy than mainstream sexual practices” (p. 282).

Paul Gebhard’s seminal article, *Fetishism and Sadomasochism* (1969), discussed BDSM in sociological terms and proved a turning point in the literature. Scholars have subsequently sought to gain understanding of BDSM from the perspectives of those who practice it. Taylor and Ussher’s (2001) study identified eight ‘discursive constructions’ of BDSM among practitioners, namely: dissidence, pleasure, escapism, transcendence, learned behaviour, intra-psychic, pathological and inexplicable. Their study has been referred to as ground-breaking for its departure from traditional essentialist theorising of BDSM and provides “important empirical data on this under-researched topic” (Langdrige & Butt, 2004, p. 37).

In their investigation of four academic perspectives of BDSM, Cross and Matheson (2006) found that the psychiatric/psychoanalytic, radical-feminist and ‘escape-from-self’ perspectives were not supported by a survey of 93 self-identified sadomasochists. Observations of virtual BDSM encounters in online ‘chat-rooms’, confirmed beforehand to be similar enough to actual BDSM encounters to warrant further investigation, and thematic analysis of resulting text exchanges lead the authors to conclude that power was central to BDSM.

Rationale for the current study

Meg Barker (2006) has highlighted the perpetuation in British psychology of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity refers to “the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, structured as a sexuality – but also privileged” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 548). The resulting marginalisation of other sexualities such as bisexuality, non-monogamies and BDSM leaves psychologists with little awareness of these sexualities and of the issues individuals who identify accordingly, generally face. A survey of UK-based clinical psychology training courses found the teaching of sexualities to be variable (Shaw, Butler, & Marriott, 2008). Meanwhile, Barker, Iantaffi and Gupta (2007) found that BDSM was rarely mentioned in texts and training courses for counsellors and psychotherapists. They added that some psychology textbooks merely reproduced dominant discourses about BDSM, such as its psychiatric classification as paraphilia.

In addition to anecdotal reports of people in BDSM lifestyles having had negative experiences with mental health professionals (e.g. Barker, 2005; Williams, 2006), a study into BDSM practitioners' experience of psychotherapy revealed variability in the provision of mental health care (Kolmes, Stock, & Moser, 2006). The study surveyed 175 people across the USA who practiced BDSM and who were also current or past consumers of mental health services. Incidences of 'biased' or 'inadequate' mental health care were characterised by notions of BDSM being 'unhealthy', confusing BDSM with abuse, requiring clients to give up BDSM or clients having to educate the therapist in BDSM. Meanwhile, cases of culturally sensitive care were characterised by the willingness of therapists to learn more about BDSM, an ability to talk about BDSM comfortably and understanding and promoting the

concept of 'safe, sane and consensual' BDSM. Kolmes, Stock and Moser (2006) warned that confusion about BDSM among mental health professionals and a failure to recognise limits of competence may lead to inadvertent harm to patients, either through empathic failures or pathologisation.

People who engage in BDSM may be discouraged from disclosing their sexual interests in therapy, or from returning to therapy for fear of the biased treatment. Barker, Iantaffi and Gupta (2007) concluded that there was a strong need for increasing BDSM awareness among therapists, and emphasised the importance of, for example, self-reflective practice. Barker (2006) explained the relevance of diversity in sexuality to applied psychology:

Psychological understandings of sexuality beyond heterosexuality and homosexuality are also relevant to other applied areas since they should inform organisational equal opportunities policies, sex education in schools, and legal debates around recognition of relationships and the treatment of those who engage in consensual SM practices. (p. 3)

Practitioner psychologists' understandings of diversity in sexualities, including BDSM, are therefore important if their objectives included: engaging people who identify accordingly in therapy; providing empathic, culturally sensitive psychological care; challenging negative stereotyping and stigmatisation associated with BDSM; and more generally, promoting equality in sexualities. Thus far, practitioner psychologists' understandings of BDSM have not been investigated. The aim of the current study was to

determine the way in which existing understandings of BDSM were reflected in practitioner psychologists' subjective understanding of BDSM.

It was important to simultaneously elicit BDSM practitioners' understanding of BDSM. Although this has been investigated previously (Taylor & Ussher, 2001; Beckmann, 2001), such understandings are temporal and may have changed. Cross and Matheson's (2006) survey of a sample of BDSM practitioners found three out of four existing theoretical understandings of BDSM to be unsupported. While research has revealed multiple understandings of BDSM, the way in which these resonate with people who practise BDSM has not been investigated. Measuring the understandings of both practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners simultaneously allows direct comparison of understandings.

The research questions were:

1. How are theoretical perspectives on BDSM, as identified by Taylor and Ussher (2001) and in relevant literature published to date, reflected in the understandings that practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners currently have of BDSM?
2. Qualitatively, how do current practitioner psychologist and BDSM practitioner understandings of BDSM compare?

The study proposal was independently reviewed and agreed (see Appendix B1). The study was granted full ethical approval (see Appendix B2).

Method

Q methodology

Q methodology, introduced in 1935 by William Stephenson, may be understood as an inversion of Spearman's method of factor analysis and conventional R methodology³, as it employs persons as its variables and tests, traits or other items as its sample (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Q methodology facilitates the systematic study of human subjectivity (Brown, 1980). Multiple-participant designs are capable of "identifying the currently predominant social viewpoints and knowledge structures relative to a chosen subject matter" (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 42). This feature makes Q methodology well suited to addressing the primary research question; the investigation of current knowledge structures concerning BDSM.

Although Q is not traditionally used for comparisons between groups, it is possible to statistically analyse two sets of Q data using secondary factor analysis. The current study, for pragmatic reasons, employed a simpler qualitative comparison of the two participant groups.

Design

Constructing the Q-set

The sample comprised a set of statements, the Q-set, conveying understandings of BDSM. These were developed from existing literature and research conducted on BDSM to date, following guidelines of Watts and Stenner (2012). Statements reflected eight

³ Sir Godfrey Thomson first suggested the letter *q* to distinguish person correlations from the more conventional trait correlations expressed by Pearson's *r* (Brown, 1980)

understandings identified by Taylor and Ussher (2001), whose study encompassed a broad range of understandings elicited from BDSM practitioners. Moreover, it was thought appropriate to draw on Taylor and Ussher's findings, as it was a UK-based study with cultural similarity. Two additional conceptualisations were included to reflect the literature elsewhere: BDSM as essentially about power, and a radical feminist perspective which positions BDSM as a manifestation and reinforcement of patriarchal ideals.

Statements were reviewed independently by two study supervisors and checked for balance, representativeness and clarity. To test accuracy, study supervisors were tasked with pairing statements to their respective understandings. Individuals who participated in a pilot were also asked to comment on the statements. The final Q set comprised 40 statements covering 10 domains, with four questions to each domain (see Appendix B3).

Internet-mediated Q sorting

FlashQ is a computer application⁴ designed for performing Q sorting online. Conducting a Q methodological study online has both benefits and drawbacks. Benefits include accessing participants who may otherwise be difficult to reach, recruiting a greater number of participants in a shorter amount of time and the facilitation of anonymous participation. Where research is mediated by a form of technology, drawbacks include a lack of knowledge of participants' true identities, loss of qualitative information and risks associated with technical difficulties.

⁴ Freeware available at <http://www.hackert.biz/flashq/home/>

Procedure

The study consisted of two parts: the sorting procedure for the identification of knowledge structures of BDSM, followed by a brief questionnaire intended to aid interpretation of resulting data. A platykurtic, quasi-normal, forced-choice sorting distribution ranging from -5 (most disagree) to +5 (most agree) (Figure 1) was employed. This facilitated and standardised the sorting procedure, and permitted the direct comparison of sorts during data analyses (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The condition of instruction read: 'Please read and sort each of the following statements as they relate to the understanding you have of, or the meaning you ascribe to BDSM'. FlashQ presented participants with each statement in turn, in random order. First, participants were tasked with pre-sorting statements into one of three piles, 'agree', 'disagree' or 'unsure'. Next, participants were presented with the sorting grid and tasked with sorting statements from each pile into the corresponding side of the grid. Statements of agreement were therefore to be sorted towards the right-hand side of the grid, disagreement to the left and unsure around the centre.

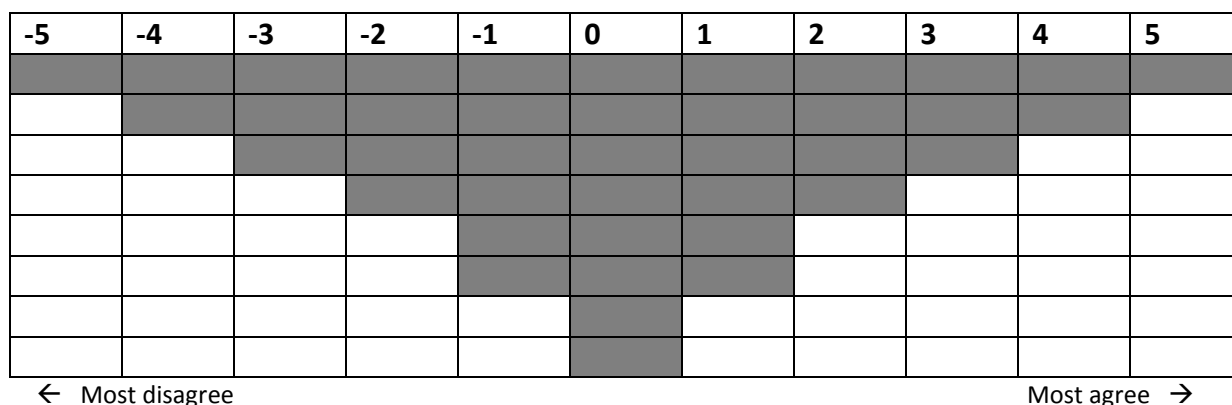


Figure 1: The sorting distribution

A pilot was completed by one BDSM participant, one psychologist and one of the study supervisors. Feedback was collected and incorporated into the study (see Appendix B4). The information sheet and questionnaires are included in Appendices B6 – 9.

Recruitment strategy

Study participants, the P-set, were practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners. As an inversion of traditional R methodology, participants serve as variables in a Q study. According to Brown (1980), a Q study requires:

Enough subjects to establish the existence of a factor for purposes of comparing one factor with another. What proportion of the population belongs in one factor rather than another is a wholly different matter and one about which Q technique ... is not concerned. (p. 192)

In the UK tradition of multiple-participant Q methodological research, an acceptable number is 40 to 60 participants (Stainton Rogers, 1995). Recruitment for both sets of participants was conducted online. A Twitter account was created and utilised to advertise the study.

Practitioner psychologists

Practitioner psychologists were clinical, counselling and forensic psychologists and psychotherapists, qualified for at least one year and currently practising in the UK. The one year post-qualification standard was added to ensure that participating psychologists had a comparable baseline-level of clinical experience, during which time they may have encountered clients who practiced BDSM. Snowballing was employed as a recruitment strategy. Fellow clinical psychology trainees were asked to forward the study to practitioner

psychologists they knew personally, but not via NHS email systems. The study was promoted via the psychology department's Twitter and Facebook accounts. Finally, a neutrally worded email, reviewed and approved by an ethics committee, was sent to graduates of a clinical psychology programme inviting participation in the study (see Appendix B5).

BDSM practitioners

BDSM practitioners were people who have practiced BDSM for at least six months. Regional BDSM groups and social networking sites were identified using the search engine Google. Contact was established and brief information provided via email, with a request that a hyperlink to the study be forwarded to members of interested groups. An academic with established links with the BDSM community forwarded the study to their contacts.

Data analyses

The software programme *PQmethod*⁵ was used to conduct data analyses. Q sorts were manually entered into PQmethod and labelled according to a coding system that comprised participants' demographical information (see Appendix B10). Data analyses were then conducted separately for each P-set according to established method (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Various statistical criteria may be applied to guide decision-making regarding the appropriate number of components or factors⁵ to extract from the data. The current study

⁵ PQmethod is purpose-built software programme for statistical analyses of Q methodological studies, freely available at <http://schmolck.userweb.mwn.de/qmethod/#PQMethod>

employed the scree test (Cattell, 1966), a conservative yet accurate principle (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The scree test involves plotting on a line graph, eigenvalues generated by principal components analysis (PCA). A line is drawn through the smaller eigenvalues (the scree), and only those above this line are retained for extraction.

Following extraction, two further statistical principles were observed in deciding on the retention of factors or components:

- (i) Accept factors or components that have two or more significant loadings following extraction (Brown, 1980, p. 222-3). In the current study, significance (p) at the 0.01 level was 0.41.
- (ii) According to Humphrey's rule, "a factor is significant if the cross-product of its two highest loadings (ignoring the sign) exceeds twice the standard error" (Brown, 1980, p. 223). A less stringent version, which requires the cross-product of the two highest loadings to exceed the standard error only once (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 108), was applied. In the current study, the standard error was 0.16.

PCA was run on each data set. Eigenvalues generated through PCA were then applied to conduct scree tests. Results from the scree tests were used to decide the appropriate number of components or factors to extract from the data. Various solutions were subsequently explored, using both PCA and the centroid method of extraction followed by orthogonal (Varimax) rotation.

Results

Participants

Final results were based on data of 40 practitioner psychologists and 40 BDSM practitioners who participated in the study⁶. Visits to the Q site via respective links were approximately 350 for practitioner psychologists and 150 for BDSM practitioners.

Participants' demographical characteristics are described in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographical characteristics of practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners

	Practitioner psychologists		BDSM practitioners	
	n = 40		n = 40	
	Count	%	Count	%
Gender				
Female	29	72.5	16	40
Male	9	22.5	15	37.5
Trans	0	-	1	2.5
Queer	0	-	5	12.5
Self-defined	1	2.5	2	5
None stated	1	2.5	1	2.5
Age range				
18 – 29	2	5	9	22.5
30 – 39	23	57.5	12	30
40 – 49	8	20	11	27.5
50 – 59	6	15	5	12.5
60 +	1	2.5	3	7.5
Sexual orientation				
Bisexual	3	7.5	17	42.5
Heterosexual	30	75	8	20
Homosexual	5	12.5	7	17.5
Pansexual	0	-	4	10
Queer	1	2.5	2	5
Self-defined	1	2.5	2	5

⁶ A technical issue resulted in 20 incomplete data sets in the practitioner psychologist group which could not be used for analyses. Recruitment continued until 40 complete data sets were achieved in both groups.

Data analyses

The centroid method of extraction followed by orthogonal (Varimax) rotation produced factors that were significantly correlated. Such factors may be too similar to interpret as distinct factors and “may simply be alternative manifestations of a single viewpoint” (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 141). Unrotated PCA solutions ultimately proved most acceptable owing the statistical strength and thus explanatory power of the first components in each solution⁷.

Factor estimates were created by identifying or ‘flagging’ significantly loading ($p > 0.41$) sorts. Ordinarily, factor estimates are generated using ‘exemplar’ sorts, that is, sorts with significant loadings on one factor but insignificant loadings on other factors, while excluding confounding sorts, that is, sorts that load significantly on more than one factor (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p.129). Confounding sorts are indicative of ‘hybrid’ views, and the aim could equally be to minimise confounders (Webler, Danielson, & Tuler, 2009). While centroid analysis is based solely on communality in variance, PCA considers both communality and individual specificity among Q sorts (Webler et al., 2009). Confounding sorts were therefore included in the generation of factor estimates and the resulting ‘model Q sorts’ or factor arrays.

⁷ On advice from Professor Steven Brown via online Q methodology network (LISTSERV@LISTSERV.KENT.EDU). See Appendix B11

Components were interpreted by systematically inspecting the relative positioning of statements within and between the factor arrays⁸, and with reference to participants' qualitative observations and demographical information.

Results for each participant group are summarised in turn. The characteristics of components are described, followed by an interpretation. Defining statements associated with each component are given in brackets, with the number of the particular statement followed by its respective rank order as it appears in the factor array (see Appendix B12). Defining statements are statements which were ranked significantly different ($p < 0.05$ or $*p < 0.01$) relative to other components. Interpretations are supplemented with relevant participants' demographic information and selected qualitative observations.

⁸ A systematic interpretive method, developed by Watts (Watts & Stenner, 2012, p. 150), which involves the generation of 'crib sheets' for each factor. The method commands engagement with every item in the factor array and thereby facilitates factor interpretation that is holistic (see Appendix B13 for example 'crib sheet').

Practitioner psychologists (PP)

Additional information provided by practitioner psychologists is described in Table 2, including personal experience of BDSM, professional training or education in BDSM, BDSM knowledgeability (on a five-point Likert scale), psychology discipline and years qualified.

Table 2: Additional information for practitioner psychologists

Practitioner psychologists		
	n = 40	%
Personal BDSM experience		
None	13	32.5
Experimented	12	30
Some experience	4	10
Considerable experience	4	10
Prefer not to say	7	17.5
BDSM training/education		
Yes	7	17.5
No	31	77.5
Not sure	2	5
BDSM knowledgeability		
1 – not at all knowledgeable	11	27.5
2	11	27.5
3	9	22.5
4	6	15
5 – very knowledgeable	3	7.5
Psychology discipline		
Clinical	36	90
Counselling	2	5
None stated	2	5
Years qualified		
1 – 2 years	8	20
3 – 5 years	12	30
6 – 10 years	10	25
11+ years	8	20
No response	2	5

PCA produced six components with eigenvalues greater than 1.00, summarised in Table 3. The scree plot, depicted in Figure 2, was suggestive of a three component/factor solution.

Table 3: Practitioner psychologists - components, eigenvalues and variance generated by PCA

Component	Eigenvalue	Variance (%)
1	22.6670	57
2	2.3251	6
3	1.8826	5
4	1.4704	4
5	1.1964	3
6	1.0873	3

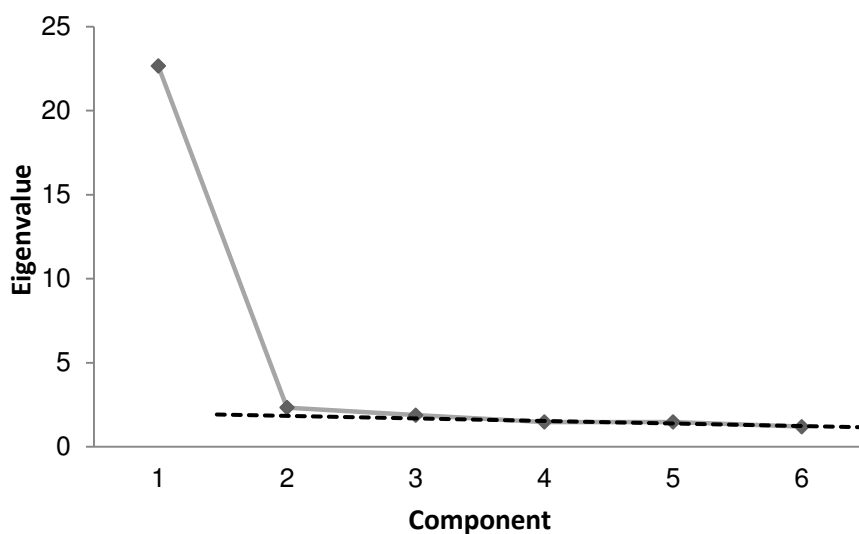


Figure 2: Practitioner psychologists - scree plot

Upon extraction, three components met the remaining statistical criteria for inclusion. A PCA generated solution with three unrotated components ultimately proved the most acceptable solution.

PP Component 1 – *Pluralistic powerful pleasure*

'*Pluralistic powerful pleasure*' emerges as a very strong component with an eigenvalue of 22.68, explaining 57% of the total variance. All 40 practitioner psychologists load significantly ($p > 0.41$) onto this component. In fact, 26 participants exhibit high loadings in excess of 0.7. The composite reliability⁹ of component 1 is very high at 0.99 and the standard error of factor Z-scores is 0.08.

The '*pluralistic powerful pleasure*' component recognises the complexity of the BDSM phenomenon with no singular universal explanation for sadomasochism (38:+3), but denies incompressibility (40:-4*; 39:-2*). Participant 35, who identified as female, heterosexual, aged 30s and reported having experimented with BDSM, elaborated:

There can be so many reasons why someone becomes interested in BDSM, I know some people who do it for a living and it's simply to earn money, others do have some unresolved childhood issues, others just simply enjoy it... I think that sexuality is so diverse and individual it can't be categorised or explained. (Participant 35)

Practitioner psychologists, perhaps unsurprisingly, think of BDSM as related to internal psychological processes (26:+3*). Power is considered fundamental to the understanding of BDSM (1:+4*; 11:+3*), as is pleasure (11:+3*). Participant 24, who identified as heterosexual, female, aged 30s with considerable experience of BDSM, stated:

It's a deliberate consensual practice by people together trying to build intimacy and experience pleasure and connection via power exchange. This is symbolised or enacted through causing pain, humiliation, degradation or discomfort. Paradoxically,

⁹ A composite reliability above 0.7 is generally desirable (Watts & Stenner, 2012)

the attention, communication and trust required to effectively enact this, and the care with which it is given and received, is the antithesis of what is being enacted (or repeated). Pleasure/relief/excitement occurs when cruel & care coexists.

(Participant 24)

The '*pluralistic powerful pleasure*' component is further characterised by disagreement with conceptualisations of BDSM as pathological (30:-3). Participant 11, who identified as heterosexual, female, aged 30s with no experience of BDSM, commented:

This in itself would not warrant a medical diagnosis or proposal of some form of treatment. If raised by the individual as a behaviour of concern or part of a pattern of behaviours by someone struggling with impulsivity vulnerability and past abuse then it should be considered within treatment to ensure it is consensual and non-damaging. (Participant 11)

The radical feminist perspective of BDSM as patriarchal is also strongly refuted (34:-4*, 35:-3*, 36:-2*). Indeed, participant 21 considers BDSM potentially empowering of women:

I don't agree that BDSM endorses the maltreatment of women. I believe that it can be empowering for women and allows power roles and stereotypes to be challenged. (Participant 21, heterosexual female aged 30s having experiment with BDSM)

PP Component 2 – *Inexplicable transcendence vs intra-psychic struggles*

The second component, '*inexplicable transcendence vs intra-psychic struggles*', comprises three significantly loading sorts, explaining 6% of the total variance. With significant loadings on both the first and second components, these three participants share in some of the majority viewpoint of component 1. As a bipolar component, it consists of contrasting understandings of BDSM. Component 2 possesses a high composite reliability of 0.92, while the standard error of Z-scores is 0.28.

The '*inexplicable transcendence*' viewpoint was shared by two psychologists who both reported 'considerable' personal experience of BDSM: participant 5 identified as male, homosexual, aged 50s; participant 25 identified as female, bisexual, aged 40s. The '*inexplicable transcendence*' component sees BDSM as transcendental (18:+5*; 19:+4; 20:+4*; 17:+1). There is also agreement that BDSM is somehow beyond comprehension (38:+2; 39:+1*; 40:+1*). This understanding is further characterised by disagreement with suppositions of BDSM as pathological (32:-4*; 31:-1*), and that BDSM serves to alleviate feelings of guilt or shame (27:-4*).

There is no language in our culture for BDSM, metaphors drawn from religion are often used though with BDSM shades of meaning. Worship and the deepest connections and inner peace that go with it are at the core of BDSM relationships and where love grows. (Participant 5)

The opposing *'intra-psychic struggles'* viewpoint was conveyed by participant 12, a homosexual male in his 40s with no personal experience of BDSM. It contests the idea that BDSM is incomprehensible (39:-3*) or mainly about pleasure (10:-2*). Instead, this understanding sees BDSM as oftentimes related to feelings of guilt and shame (27:+4*) and potentially indicative of psychopathology (30:+1*).

It is not appropriate to generalise, but I think that often sado-masochistic tendencies are expressions of unconscious conflicts associated with guilt and shame. Not always pathological, but an attempt to resolve conflicts around sex and sexuality. At the extremes I would say it is definitely pathological, as a person is not relating to the other, they are using the other. (Participant 12)

PP Component 3 – *Dissidence vs perplexing pleasure*

The *'dissidence vs perplexing pleasure'* component comprises three significantly loading sorts, explaining 5% of the total variance. As these sorts load significantly onto both components 1 and 3, the participants share some of the majority understanding. A divergent viewpoint emerges from this bipolar component. Component 3 has a high composite reliability of 0.92, and the standard error of z-scores is 0.28.

The *'dissidence'* viewpoint was shared by two female psychologists, both aged 30s and bisexually oriented. Participant 9 reported some experience of BDSM, while Participant 27 had experimented with BDSM. This understanding is consistent with BDSM as an anti-conformist challenge to the heteronormative categorisation of sexuality and gender (7:+3; 5:+2*; 6:+2*). *'Dissidence'* also supports transcendental associations (17:+4*; 18:+1*,

20:+1*). BDSM is not considered inexplicable (39:-5*; 37:-4*; 38:-2*; 40:-2*), nor is it thought to be primarily about pleasure (10:-4*; 11:-2*).

In a traditional heteronormative relationship, a man is dominant over a woman: in the sexual aspects of their relationship, as well as in financial, social and all other aspects of their relationship (except possibly child-rearing). Some women and men enjoy playing with these roles in their sexual relationships. This may be seen as a way of challenging the roles attributes to men and women in society through symbolic representation. For most people the symbolic meaning of play is not explicit. (Participant 38)

The opposing view, '*perplexing pleasure*', was taken by participant 26, who identified as female, aged 30s, heterosexual with no experience of BDSM. This viewpoint is distinct in that BDSM is thought of as puzzling (39:+3*), however associations with pleasure (11:+4) and internal psychological processes (26:+4) do resonate. The notion of BDSM as transcendental, however, is unexpected and subsequently contested (17:-3*): "I had not encountered the concept of BDSM as having religious or spiritual significance to an individual" (Participant 26).

BDSM practitioners

Additional information provided by BDSM practitioners is described in Table 4, including BDSM role and whether or not they would disclose their interest in BDSM to a psychologist.

Table 4: Additional information for BDSM practitioners

BDSM practitioners		
	n = 40	%
BDSM orientation		
Dominant	11	27.5
Submissive	13	32.5
Switch	13	32.5
Other	3	7.5
Disclosure of BDSM interest to psychologist		
Yes	16	40
No	8	20
Unsure	16	40

PCA produced eight components with eigenvalues greater than 1.00, as summarised in table 5. The scree plot, depicted in Figure 3, appeared suggestive of three component/factor solution.

Table 5: BDSM practitioners - components, eigenvalues and variance generated by PCA

Component	Eigenvalue	Variance (%)
1	22.8528	57
2	1.9872	5
3	1.7328	4
4	1.3899	3
5	1.2419	3
6	1.2202	3
7	1.0470	3
8	1.0127	3

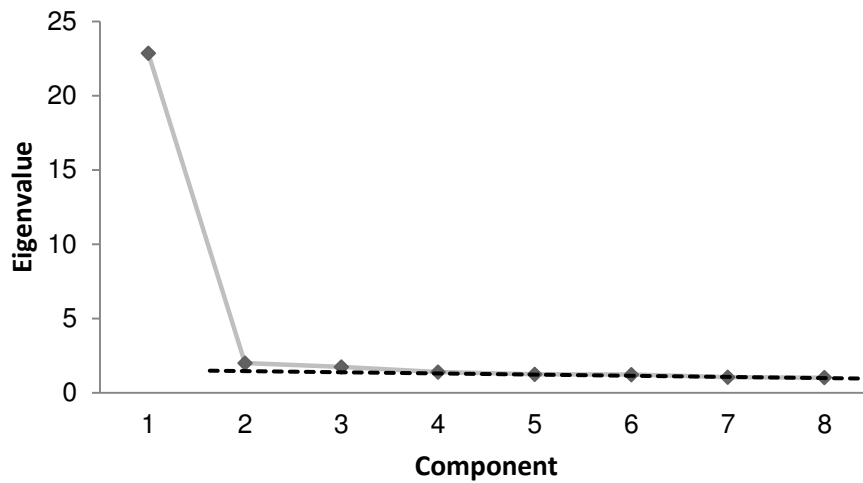


Figure 3: BDSM practitioners - scree plot

Upon extraction, three components met the remaining statistical criteria for inclusion. As with the practitioner psychologist group, a PCA generated solution with three unrotated components ultimately proved the most acceptable solution.

BDSM Component 1 – *Pluralistic powerful pleasure*

A very strong first component emerges for the BDSM group, with an eigenvalue of 22.85 which explains 57% of the total variance. The '*pluralistic powerful pleasure*' component comprises 39 significantly loading sorts ($p > 0.41$), all of which contributed to the formation of the factor array. The component possesses a composite reliability of 0.99 and the standard error of Z-scores is 0.08.

The '*pluralistic powerful pleasure*' component recognises the complexity of the BDSM phenomenon, with no universal explanation for BDSM interests (38:+4; 37:+3*). Participant 23, who identified as queer in terms of gender and sexual orientation, aged in their 20s and assumed the switch position in BDSM, commented:

I believe very firmly in plurality and diversity of experience: I do not believe there is any single reason that is both necessary and sufficient for an interest in BDSM. Discussion with other kinky people reveals a wide range of reasons for interest in these areas. (Participant 23)

This viewpoint is also characterised by agreement with BDSM as pleasure (11:+5*; 9:+2*): "Mutual pleasure is what BDSM is all about - wouldn't be doing it if it wasn't - and the means to achieve it are both physical and mental" (Participant 15). Some participants commented that statements had not adequately reflected the 'fun' element of BDSM.

The '*pluralistic powerful pleasure*' component also considers the concept of power fundamental to the understanding of BDSM (4:+4, 1:+2*): "I think BDSM is mainly about power and playing with power dynamics within a safe and agreed structure." (Participant 33, homosexual gender-queer switch, aged 30s).

This majority view rejects the notion that BDSM is unhealthy or indicative of psychopathology (29: -5*):

True BDSM is consensual and shouldn't cause any impairment to someone's life (other than perhaps stigma from other people), there's nothing unhealthy or harmful about it, but professionals might find it hard to understand. (Participant 19; female bisexual submissive, aged 20s)

Indeed, many agree that BDSM practices can be therapeutic (28:+3*). BDSM practitioners elaborated on this point: "...I do not consider what I do as unhealthy, on the contrary I find it therapeutic and a great stress-reliever" (Participant 5; bisexual, occasional transvestite, submissive, aged 60s); "...BDSM can indeed contribute to emotional well-being and increase of self-esteem and self-acceptance" (Participant 27, male homosexual switch, aged 40s).

The radical feminist perspective, which positions BDSM as manifest of patriarchal ideals, is also dismissed (35:-4; 33:-3*; 34:-2*). Participant 6, who identified as homosexual, male, switch, aged 30s pointed out: "Some women top men and vice versa so there is no inequality in term of sexes".

BDSM Component 2 – *Intra-psychic sanctity vs powerful pleasure*

The '*intra-psychic sanctity vs powerful pleasure*' component comprises three significantly loading sorts and explains 6% of the total variance. Two of these sorts also display significant loadings on the main component; those participants therefore share some of the majority viewpoint. As a bipolar component, contrasting views emerge. Component 2 has a high composite reliability of 0.92 and the standard error of Z-scores is 0.28.

The '*intra-psychic sanctity*' understanding was shared by two BDSM practitioners: Participant 6, who identified as male, homosexual, switch aged 30s; and Participant 34, who identified as queer in terms of gender and sexual orientation, aged 40s. This component supports the understanding that BDSM is a complex phenomenon (38:+5*) related to

internal psychological process (25:+4*; 26:+2), and that it holds spiritual meaning (20:+4; 18:+3*).

I lived in a country where being gay was not tolerated or 'advertised' but still felt the need for BDSM and Leather fetish. The one [conceptualisation] that I particularly agreed with was the spiritual side of BDSM. (Participant 6)

The '*intra-psychic sanctity*' viewpoint includes agreement with the statement: 'BDSM is a symptom of an unhappy or abusive childhood' (30:+2*). Relative to other components emergent from the BDSM practitioner group, the component is further characterised by milder disagreement with statements relating BDSM to psychological disturbance (29:-1*; 31:-1). More strongly refuted are various understandings of BDSM as: an eroticised power differential (2:-5*), patriarchal (35:-4; 34:-1) and dissidence (8:-4*).

The opposing view, '*powerful pleasure*' was held by Participant 10, who identified as male, homosexual, submissive, aged 50s. This understanding endorses the majority viewpoint represented by the first component, that BDSM is fundamentally concerned with power and pleasure. A relatively neutral stance towards the radical feminist perspective of BDSM as patriarchal (35:+1*, 33:0; 34:0; 36:0) distinguishes this view from the other. BDSM is generally also not considered a form of escapism (13:-5*; 15:-1).

It is more about trust with the person with whom you desire to have an exchange of power. Sex and variety of sexual pleasure is a normal part of everyday life and nothing one has to escape but to accept as normal. (Participant 10)

BDSM Component 3 – *Hallowed habituation vs psychic retreat*

The '*hallowed habituation vs psychic retreat*' component comprises five significantly loading sorts, explaining 4% of the total study variance. These sorts also possess significant loadings on the first component and sorters therefore espouse some of the majority viewpoint. As another bipolar component, divergent viewpoints emerge. The component has a high composite reliability of 0.95 and the standard error of Z-scores is 0.22.

The '*hallowed habituation*' view was shared by three BDSM practitioners: Participant 37 who identified as female, heterosexual, switch and aged 40s; Participant 39 who identified as male, homosexual, dominant and aged 50s; and Participant 40 who identified as male, bisexual, submissive and aged 60s. This viewpoint lends further support to the understanding of BDSM as having spiritual meaning (20:+5; 18:+4). Agreement with the behavioural conceptualisation of BDSM is a distinguishing feature of this viewpoint (24:+4*; 22:+3*): "One grows one's BDSM scenes based on previous experiences; learning to achieve the most possible pleasure for (hopefully) both parties" (Participant 39). BDSM is not considered a sign of mental illness (29:-4*), nor is it thought of as intra-psychic (27:-3*; 26:-2*; 25:-1): "I feel that my sexual preferences are purely that... it is not a reflection of a turbulent childhood or unhealthy relationship" (Participant 37).

Meanwhile, two BDSM practitioners shared the contrasting view: Participant 28 who identified as male, heterosexual, dominant and aged 20s; and Participant 36 who identified as female, heterosexual, submissive and aged 20s. The '*psychic retreat*' viewpoint recognises the complexity of BDSM and affirms that there is no universal explanation for BDSM (37:+5), yet it is not considered incomprehensible (40:-4). There is some agreement

that BDSM serves as a form of escapism (13:+3; 15:+2). It is distinct, however, in the understanding that BDSM is related to internal psychological processes (26:+3).

Having worked in a fetish club and been around the scene for a number of years I have yet to hear two people give the same reasons for their interest in BDSM. The predominate (sic) one I have heard from men with high powered jobs is that it is a release from the pressure to have someone else take control. I believe my own interest stems from my first sexual encounter being rape[d]. Initially I believe I used BDSM to re-enact the power difference but with the added 'safe word' meaning I had ultimate power. ...BDSM allowed me to 'play' the victim role (although I never did rape scenes) but knowing I could stop it at any time (something I wasn't able to do when I was raped). It has always been related to my psychological processes, either as a way to work through difficult experiences or to shut off from the real world for a while... (Participant 36)

A neutral stance is assumed towards items relating BDSM to psychopathology, including that BDSM is symptomatic of an unhappy or abusive childhood (30:0) and that BDSM practitioners would benefit from psychological therapy (32:0). BDSM practice in itself, however, is considered therapeutic (28:2). In response to a question whether any conceptualisations of BDSM were not reflected in the study, Participant 28 described the act of 'aftercare', which seems related to suggestions that BDSM can be therapeutic:

it would've been nice to have one talking about the concept of aftercare, the post-play act of looking after one another as a way of bringing each other back to a stable mind-set after the intensity of whatever play just happened. (Participant 28)

The *'psychic retreat'* viewpoint refutes conceptualisations of BDSM as perpetuating patriarchal ideals (35:-5) and as spiritual (18:-4):

The abundance of statements that relate to spirituality stood out. I've never noticed anyone I know who plays in the BDSM sense equate anything they experience to anything spiritual. Endorphin rushes, emotional connections to the other partner and spacing out are all commonly talked about. (Participant 28)

Discussion

This study sought to determine how existing understandings of BDSM, as described in the literature to date, were reflected in practitioner psychologists' current understandings of BDSM, and how their understandings compared to those of BDSM practitioners. Forty practitioner psychologists and 40 BDSM practitioners completed a web-based Q-sort, followed by a brief questionnaire. The resulting data, analysed separately for each participant group using principle components analyses (PCA), yielded three components for each group. The primary components explained 57% of the variance for each group respectively. Practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners were found to have similar primary understandings of BDSM: a complex phenomenon mainly concerned with power and pleasure.

The *'pluralistic powerful pleasure'* understanding recognised the complexity of the BDSM phenomenon and that those who engage in BDSM do so for various reasons. Despite this complexity, BDSM was generally not considered incomprehensible. Power and pleasure emerged as primary understandings of BDSM. While practitioner psychologists, perhaps

unsurprisingly, also considered BDSM to be associated with an individual's internal psychological processes, they did not see it a personality trait. Meanwhile, for some BDSM practitioners, statements relating to pleasure did not adequately reflect the 'fun' aspect of BDSM. They highlighted that BDSM can be reflexive, with interactions moving from playful, light-hearted and even funny, to more serious and intense, and back to a gentler period of 'aftercare'. Conceptualisations relating to power were consistent with findings of Cross and Matheson (2006) and Bauer (2008), while associations with pleasure replicated findings of Taylor and Ussher (2001).

In the main, practitioner psychologists did not regard BDSM interests pathological. Indeed, they considered BDSM part of a diverse and complex spectrum of human sexuality. Psychologists added that, if a client raised BDSM interests as a matter that caused them concern, then it could be explored in psychotherapy. The significance of those concerns would then be considered within the context of that client's individual psychosocial circumstances. The majority of BDSM practitioners strongly contested associations of BDSM with psychopathology, and some participants found such associations downright offensive. Many considered BDSM to have therapeutic qualities or the potential to facilitate personal growth and promote psychological wellbeing. These understandings stand in stark contrast to the historical psychiatric view of BDSM as indicative of psychopathology.

Research into BDSM increased considerably in the past three to four decades. BDSM had been pathologised and criminalised, and as with the lesbian and gay movement, a response to these forms of oppression was further research and theorisation. The emergence of social constructionism in the 1980s brought an understanding of BDSM as a sociological phenomenon which represented a significant departure from earlier

individualistic, essentialist understandings of BDSM. Scholars from the sociological and social psychological sciences increasingly sought to understand BDSM from the perspective of those who practiced it. The current study built on such research with BDSM practitioners, including Taylor and Ussher (2001) and Cross and Matheson (2006). Practitioner psychologists' understandings of BDSM have not previously been surveyed in a similar way. The present study adds to the BDSM literature, a sample of UK-based practitioner psychologists' current understandings of BDSM and some evidence that they have broadly come to understand BDSM in a similar way to those who practice it. This may be indicative of a move away from pathologising understandings of diverse sexualities in psychology.

Limitations

The current study has a number of limitations, considered next in terms of sampling and procedure.

Sampling

A quarter of the psychologist sample identified as LGBT and Queer; they may have been more accepting of diversity in sexuality and therefore also in their responses. By comparison, three quarters of the BDSM practitioner sample identified as LGBT. A proportion of the BDSM sample was recruited via an established scholar of BDSM, bisexuality and polyamory in the UK. While this may have contributed to a sampling bias towards the LGBT population, the greater number of LGBT participants may also be explained by an overlap between the bisexual and BDSM communities (Barker et. al, 2012).

As a self-selected sample, psychologists who chose to participate may have done so because of a particular interest in sexualities and therefore may have been more informed about the subject, compared with psychologists who chose not to participate. The hit-rate

for the web link sent to psychologists represented 73% of overall traffic to the study website with a response rate of around 16%. By comparison, the hit-rate for the web link sent to BDSM practitioners represented 27% of overall traffic with a response rate of around 29%¹⁰. The higher hit-rate for the psychologist sample was partly the result of extended recruitment for this group, after a technical problem resulted in 20 incomplete and unusable datasets. Meanwhile, the higher response rate among BDSM practitioners may be due to the relevance of the subject to this particular group and perhaps a greater confidence that their views were valid and worth contributing.

The Q-set was developed from the existing literature on BDSM to represent a total of ten understandings of BDSM, with four statements to each conceptualisation. Notwithstanding efforts to ensure representativeness and balance discussed earlier, some understandings were neglected. BDSM participants rightly pointed out that the study did not reflect BDSM relationships or intimacy.

Procedure

Undertaking the Q-sorting procedure online rather than in person had both advantages and drawbacks. The online procedure afforded participants anonymity, which was particularly important considering the personal nature of the study topic and associated concerns about stigma. Relatedly, the BDSM community can be difficult to access because of its secretive nature and precisely because of stigma. Conducting the study online facilitated access and also allowed a greater number of participants to be included within set constraints of the current research project. A drawback of online Q-sorting is the loss of

¹⁰ Response rates calculated as follows:

Psychologist sample: 40 complete + 20 incomplete datasets/367 hits; BDSM sample: 40 datasets/138 hits

potentially valuable qualitative information, for example, participants' reasoning during the sorting process. The online procedure attempts to account for this with specific questions about the manner in which statements were sorted.

Implications for clinical psychology

A better understanding among psychologists of diversity in sexuality is important in terms of promoting equality in mental health care and cultural competence in clinical practice, and avoiding inadvertent harm through empathic failures and/or pathologisation. The current study provides some evidence that comparable understandings of BDSM exist between samples of practitioner psychologists and BDSM practitioners.

Q methodology aims only to determine the existence of particular viewpoints, and thereafter to understand and compare these viewpoints. Although Q methodology is not concerned with generalising to populations of people, a form of conceptual generalisation, which focuses on concepts or categories, theoretical propositions and models of practice, may be employed (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Practitioner psychologists did not consider themselves particularly knowledgeable on the subject of BDSM, with more than half rating their knowledgeability as 'little' to 'not at all', and more than three quarters reporting no formal training on BDSM. A survey of clinical psychology training courses in the UK found teaching on sexualities to be variable (Shaw, Butler & Marriott 2008), which may partly explain this perceived lack of knowledgeability. Limited knowledgeability or lack of confidence in existing knowledge may have a detrimental effect on clinical practice.

The British Psychological Society in 2012 published guidelines for psychologists working therapeutically with sexual and gender minority clients (Shaw et al., 2012). These guidelines are set within the context of requirements of the Health and Care Professions Council's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (2008). The guidelines lead with a statement that gender and sexual minority identities and practices are not in themselves indicative of mental disorder. In the current study, practitioner psychologists' understanding of BDSM was consistent with this. The guidelines encourage knowledgeability in areas such as the diversity of gender and sexual minority people and the particular challenges for those with physical and/or mental health difficulties who may face multiple stigmatisations. Among LGBT populations, for example, rates of depression, anxiety, substance misuse and eating disorders are higher, as are rates of deliberate self-harm, contemplated and completed suicide. Working clinically, the guidelines call for affirmative and self-reflective practice and the use of continuous professional development (CPD) to improve knowledgeability. Training courses are directed to mainstream teaching on gender and sexual minority issues, not to include such topics in a tokenistic manner.

Perhaps an issue more generally, is the ability to comfortably and confidently talk about sex and sexualities within the context of psychological therapy. This aspect of our being seems neglected in clinical practice and psychological formulation, which is not in keeping with a holistic approach to psychological practice.

Directions for future research

The current study employed a qualitative comparison of the data analyses of each group. A more sophisticated way of conducting a comparison of two sets of Q methodological data is secondary factor analysis, and employing this statistical method may be a valuable addition to the current study.

Recruitment in the current study involved self-selection, that is, participants were invited to participate on a voluntary basis. Given the implications of self-selection on reporting discussed earlier, it may be interesting to repeat the current study with a sample of psychologists selected at random and compare their views to those of the current sample. Alternatively, a sample of psychologists may be surveyed using the Attitudes about Sadoomasochism Scale (ASMS) (Yost, 2010), a reliable and valid measure of stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes towards people who engage in BDSM.

Another question emerging from the current study concerns the way in which psychologists perceive themselves to be lacking in BDSM knowledgeability. For example, are psychologists familiar with the concept of affirmative practice in working therapeutically with sexual and gender minority clients? How knowledgeable are psychologists about particular issues these clients may encounter?

One might question whether further research on BDSM is warranted, whether the voyeuristic gaze of research may be turned elsewhere. The explicit negotiation of consent in BDSM interactions raises interesting questions about consent in normative sexualities, which tends to be implicitly assumed. There is an assumption that 'sexual citizenship' is what is desired (Langdrige, 2006), yet BDSM might lose some of its transgressive appeal if this were to be achieved.

Conclusions

The current study provides empirical evidence of comparable consensus understandings of BDSM between a sample of UK practitioner psychologists and a sample of BDSM practitioners. BDSM is a complex phenomenon and motivations for engagement in BDSM is multiple and varied. Power and pleasure appear to be central to BDSM, confirming some of the existing literature, including Taylor and Usher (2001), Beckmann (2001), Cross and Matheson (2006) and Bauer (2008). The current study adds to a body of contemporary literature on BDSM and may serve to raise awareness and increase understanding of BDSM among practitioner psychologists, and more generally, encourage discussion of sex and sexualities in psychological practice.

Reference list

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.)*. Washington, DC: APA.
- Barker, M. (2005). On tops, bottoms and ethical sluts: The place of BDSM and polyamory in lesbian and gay psychology. *Lesbian and Gay Psychology Review*, 6(2), 124-129.
- Barker, M. (2006). Why I Study' bisexuality and beyond. *The Psychologist*, 19(1), 33–34.
Retrieved from <http://oro.open.ac.uk/17259/2/C2299767.pdf>
- Barker, M., Iantaffi, A. & Gupta, C. (2007). Kinky clients, kinky counselling? The challenges and potentials of BDSM. In L. Moon (Ed.), *Feeling queer or queer feelings: Radical approaches to counselling sex, sexualities and genders* (pp. 106 - 124). London, UK: Routledge.
- Barker, M., Richards, C., Jones, R., Bowes-Catton, H., & Plowman, T., Yockney, J. & Morgan, T. (2012). *The Bisexuality report: Bisexual inclusion in LGBT equality and diversity*. Milton Keynes: The Open University Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance.
- Bauer, R. (2008). Transgressive and transformative gendered sexual practices and white privileges: The case of the Dyke/Trans BDSM communities. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 36 (3/4), 233-253.
- Beckmann, A. (2001). Deconstructing myths: The social construction of sadomasochism versus subjugated knowledges of practitioners of consensual SM. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, 8(2): 66-95.

Berlant, L., & Warner, M. (1998). Sex in public. *Critical Inquiry*, 24(2), 547–566.

Brown, S. R. (1980). *Political subjectivity: Applications of Q methodology in political science*.
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Brown, S. R. (1993). A primer on Q methodology. *Operant subjectivity*, 16(3/4), 91–138.

Cattell, R. B. (1966). The Scree Test For The Number Of Factors. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 1(2), 245–276.

Cross, P. A., & Matheson, K. (2006). Understanding sadomasochism: An empirical examination of four perspectives. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 50(2-3), 133–166.

Connolly, P. H. (2006). Psychological functioning of bondage/domination/sado-masochism (BDSM) practitioners. *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality*, 18(1), 79–120.

Gebhard, P. (1969). Fetishism and sadomasochism. In J. Masserman: *Dynamics of deviant sexuality*. New York: Grune & Stratton.

Health Professions Council. (2008). *Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics*. London: HPC.

Janus, S. S., & Janus, C. L. (1993). *The Janus report on sexual behavior*. Oxford, England: John Wiley & Sons.

Kleinplatz, P., & Moser, C. (2005). Is S/M pathological? *Lesbian & Gay Psychology Review*, 6(3), 255–260.

Kleinplatz, P., & Moser, C. A. (2006). *Sadomasochism: powerful pleasures*. Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press.

Kolmes, K., Stock, W. & Moser, C. (2006). Investigating bias in psychotherapy with BDSM clients. *Journal of Homosexuality* 50(2/3), 301-324.

Langdrige, D. (2006). Voices from the margins: Sadomasochism and sexual citizenship. *Citizenship Studies*, 10(4), 373 - 389.

Langdrige, D., & Butt, T. (2004). A Hermeneutic phenomenological investigation of the construction of sadomasochistic identities. *Sexualities*, 7(1), 31–53.

Nicholls, M. (2006). Psychotherapeutic issues with “kinky” clients: Clinical problems, yours and theirs. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 50(2-3), 281-300.

Pitagora, D. (2013). Consent vs coercion: BDSM interactions highlight a fine but immutable line. *The New School Psychology Bulletin*, 10(1), 27-36.

Powls, J., & Davies, J. (2012). A descriptive review of research relating to sadomasochism: considerations for clinical practice. *Deviant Behavior*, 33(3), 223–234.

Richters, J., De Visser, R. O., Rissel, C. E., Grulich, A. E., & Smith, A. M. A. (2008). Demographic and psychosocial features of participants in bondage and discipline, sadomasochism or dominance and submission (BDSM): Data from a national survey. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 5(7), 1660–1668.

- Sagarin, B. J., Cutler, B., Cutler, N., Lawler-Sagarin, K. a, & Matuszewich, L. (2009). Hormonal changes and couple bonding in consensual sadomasochistic activity. *Archives of sexual behavior, 38*(2), 186–200.
- Shaw, L., Butler, C., Langdrige, D., Gibson, S., Barker, M., Lenihan, P., ... Richards, C. (2012). *Guidelines and Literature Review for Psychologists Working Therapeutically with Sexual and Gender Minority Clients*. Leicester: The British Psychological Society.
- Shaw, L., Butler, C., & Marriott, C. (2008). Sex and sexuality teaching in UK clinical psychology courses. *Clinical Psychology Forum, 187*, 7 – 11.
- Stainton Rogers, R. (1995). Q methodology. In J. A. Smith, R. Harre, & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.), *Rethinking methods in psychology* (pp. 178–192). London: Sage.
- Taylor, G. W., & Ussher, J. M. (2001). Making sense of S&M: A discourse analytic account. *Sexualities, 4*(3), 293–314.
- Watts, S., & Stenner, P. (2012). *Doing Q methodological research: Theory, method & interpretation*. London: Sage.
- Webler, T., Danielson, S., & Tuler, S. (2009). Using Q method to reveal social perspectives in environmental research. *Greenfield MA: Social and Environmental Research Institute*. Retrieved from <http://www.seri-us.org/sites/default/files/Qprimer.pdf> - Using Q Method to Reveal Social Perspectives.pdf
- Weiss, M. D. (2006). Mainstreaming kink: the politics of BDSM representation in U.S. popular media. *Journal of homosexuality, 50*(2-3), 103–32.

Williams, D. J. (2006). Different (painful!) strokes for different folks: A general overview of sexual sadomasochism (SM) and its diversity. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity, 13*(4), 333–346.

Wismeijer, A. A., & van Assen, M. A. (2013). Psychological characteristics of BDSM practitioners. *The Journal of Sexual Medicine, 10*(8), 1943-1952.

World Health Organisation. (1992). *ICD-10: International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems (10th ed.)*. New York, NY: Author

Zwick, W. R., & Velicer, W. F. (1986). Comparison of five rules for determining the number of components to retain. *Psychological Bulletin, 99*(3), 432–442.

SECTION C

Critical Appraisal: BDSM Reflected

⌘D⌘↑T⌘D⌘IXD⌘↓ΓTTΠ↑IX↓oЫIXI↑D⌘T%⌘D↑IXD↓IX⌘↔

Word count: 1721

SECTION D

APPENDICES

Additional information on existing literature reviews

Review	Studies reviewed
<i>Weinberg (1987)</i>	6 empirical studies plus 2 dissertations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questionnaire studies: 1 ▪ Frame analysis: 1 ▪ Content analyses: 2 ▪ Theoretical: 1 ▪ Not stated/unclear: 1 ▪ Doctoral dissertations: 2
<i>Weinberg (1994)</i>	12 empirical studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questionnaire studies: 5 ▪ Content analyses: 4 ▪ Ethnographic research: 2 ▪ Theoretical essays: 1
<i>Weinberg (2006)</i>	12 empirical studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Survey/Questionnaire studies: 5 ▪ Content analysis: 1 ▪ Ethnographic research: 3 ▪ Critical essays: 3
<i>Williams (2006)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several studies cited; none reviewed in depth
<i>Guidroz (2008)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several studies cited; none reviewed in depth <p>References Langdridge & Butt (2004) and Weinberg reviews</p>
<i>Powls & Davies (2012)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several studies cited in discussing their thematic analysis of the literature, none reviewed in depth <p>References Taylor & Ussher (2001), Cross & Matheson (2006), Sagarin et al. (2009), Weinberg</p>
<i>Pitagora (2013)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Several studies cited; none reviewed in depth <p>References Sagarin et al. (2009), Cross & Matheson (2006), Taylor & Ussher (2001)</p>

Additional information on sampling, measures and data analyses

Paper	Sample	Sample strategy	Measures	Data analysis
<i>Yost & Hunter (2012)</i>	N = 372 Women: <i>n</i> = 144 Men: <i>n</i> = 128 Range: 19 – 76 years (<i>M</i> = 40.25 years)	Advertisements in USA-based BDSM publications and communications in BDSM organisations, websites and community events invited voluntary participation in study. After brief screening, volunteers were directed to anonymous, online questionnaire.	BDSM self-identification questionnaire: 1. Multiple options for BDSM role	Chi-square
			2. Open ended for initial interest in BDSM	Thematic analysis (following Braun & Clarke, 2006)
<i>Taylor & Ussher (2001)</i>	N = 24 Women: <i>n</i> = 10 Men: <i>n</i> = 14 Range: 22 – 65 years (<i>M</i> = 34.6 years)	Self-identified sadomasochists living in London, Brighton and Amsterdam recruited through BDSM clubs, organisations and social networks.	Semi-structured interviews, tape-recorded and transcribed	Discourse analysis
<i>Langdrige & Butt (2004)</i>	Web-based text from BDSM-related webpages	Systematic search of world wide web over two years; wide range of search terms entered into search engines Yahoo, Excite and Google to identify BDSM-related websites	N/A	Hermeneutic phenomenological analysis

Additional information on sampling, measures and data analyses (continued)

Paper	Sample	Sample strategy	Measures	Data analysis
<i>Sagarin et al. (2009)</i>	<p><i>Study 1:</i> N = 13</p> <p>Women: <i>n</i> = 6 Men : <i>n</i> = 7 Range: 30 – 75 years (<i>M</i> = 45 years)</p>	Data collected at play party at <i>Arizona Power Exchange</i> (APEX), a BDSM organisation in Phoenix, Arizona, USA.	<p>1. Physiological response: Enzyme immunoassays of saliva samples for changes in cortisol and testosterone</p> <p>2. Psychological response: Questionnaire, including two items from existing measuring relationship closeness</p>	ANOVA
	<p><i>Study 2:</i> N = 61 Women: <i>n</i> = 29 Men: <i>n</i> = 32 Range: 21 – 62 years (<i>M</i> = 40.5 years)</p>	Data collected at two play parties of <i>Thunder in the Mountains</i> , an annual BDSM conference held in Denver, Colorado, USA.		
<i>Newmahr (2008)</i>	N = 20	Members of 'Caeden' BDSM community; no specific sampling strategy reported	Field notes Semi-structured interviews, tape-recorded and transcribed	Transcriptions coded for discursive and conceptual themes using qualitative software, Atlas.ti; Ethnographic analysis
<i>Beckmann (2001)</i>	N = 16	Snowballing Relational outcroppings	Participant observations, field notes Unstructured, non-directive interviews	Not reported

Additional information on sampling, measures and data analyses (continued)

Paper	Sample	Sample strategy	Measures	Data analysis
<i>Cross & Matheson (2006) – Study 1</i>	<i>BDSM participant group:</i> N = 93 Women: <i>n</i> = 24 Men: <i>n</i> = 69	Postings on BDSM-related Internet news groups	Psychometric battery consisting of wide range of existing questionnaires and some which were developed for the purpose of the study	Various statistical analyses, including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chi-square ▪ ANOVA ▪ MANOVA ▪ Principle Components Analysis
	<i>Non-BDSM comparison group:</i> N = 61 Women: <i>n</i> = 15 Men: <i>n</i> = 46	Postings on non-sex related Internet news groups		
<i>Cross & Matheson (2006) – Study 2</i>	<i>n</i> = 10/group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ‘Virtual’ BDSM ▪ ‘Real-life’ BDSM ▪ Non-BDSM/control ▪ Online fantasy role-play games 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Virtual BDSM group: BDSM Internet chatrooms ▪ Real-life BDSM group: from Study 1 sample ▪ Non-BDSM group: from Study 1 control group ▪ Online fantasy role-play group: online news groups devoted to discussions of fantasy role play 	SBI	Agglomerative hierarchical cluster analyses
<i>Cross & Matheson (2006) – Study 3</i>	N = 16 8 interactions: 6 heterosexual dyads; 2 female same-sex dyads Range: 21 to 47 years (<i>M</i> = 28.8 years)	Observation of virtual BDSM interactions in BDSM chatrooms	Transcripts of online text	Content analyses Coding by two independent judges, good inter-rater reliability: $\phi = 0.67 - 1.00$
<i>Bauer (2008)</i>	N = 50	Self-identified ‘dykes, trans people and queers’ recruited through mailing lists and personal contacts	Semi-structured interviews, tape-recorded and transcribed	Grounded theory
<i>Lindemann (2011)</i>	N = 66 Range: 20 – 58 years (<i>M</i> = 37.3 years)	Professional dominatrices, or ‘pro-dommes’ in New York City (52) and San Francisco (14), USA recruited via Internet-based advertisements and directories, and snowballing	Semi-structured interviews	Not reported

Understandings of BDSM as described in respective articles

Article	Understandings of BDSM				
	Normative	Learned behaviour	Psychopathology	Power	
				Transgressive	Transformative
<i>Yost & Hunter (2012)</i>					
<i>Taylor & Ussher (2001)</i>					
<i>Langdrige & Butt (2004)</i>					
<i>Sagarin et al. (2009)</i>					
<i>Newmahr (2008)</i>					
<i>Beckmann (2001)</i>					
<i>Cross & Matheson (2006)</i>					
<i>Bauer (2008)</i>					
<i>Lindemann (2011)</i>					

Note: Shaded cells indicate understandings of BDSM describe in the article

THIS APPENDIX HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE ELECTRONIC COPY

THIS APPENDIX HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE ELECTRONIC COPY

STATEMENTS /Q SET**BDSM as power**

1. BDSM is about the mutual creation and maintenance of a power differential between two or more individuals
2. The unequal distribution of power in sexual relations is recognised and eroticised in BDSM
3. BDSM is a compensation, continuation, re-enactment or reversed re-enactment of past or present power imbalances
4. BDSM is about the consensual exchange of power

BDSM as dissidence

5. BDSM is a deliberate challenge of the sexual norm
6. BDSM parodies, and thereby aims to expose and undermine, sexual relations that have traditionally been subjugating, oppressive and exploitative, especially of women
7. BDSM is anti-conformist and challenges the usual , 'heteronormative' categorisation of sex, sexuality and gender
8. BDSM is oppositional to conventional 'vanilla sex'; it's a celebration of perversity

BDSM as pleasure

9. BDSM is primarily about play, as reflected in commonly used BDSM terms such as 'roleplay', 'scene', 'playroom', 'sex game' and 'sex toys'
10. BDSM is purely recreational; it doesn't need to be 'understood'
11. In BDSM, physical and mental stimulation of varying intensity is employed to generate mutual pleasure
12. BDSM may be thought of as a form of thrill-seeking behaviour, engaged in for the 'adrenaline rush' or 'endorphine-high', not unlike extreme sports, for example.

BDSM as escapism

13. BDSM is an escape from ordinariness of everyday life
14. BDSM allows for the mundane of everyday life to be replaced by fantasy
15. BDSM offers a powerful, temporary escape from burdensome, higher-level self-awareness
16. BDSM serves to compensate for perceived lack in life, such as feelings of loneliness and boredom

BDSM as transcendence

17. BDSM is about achieving an altered or heightened state of consciousness
18. BDSM, with its rituals and conventions, is about ultimately experiencing something spiritual
19. BDSM can create a sense of enlightenment or 'other-worldliness'
20. The 'high' achievable through the practice of BDSM is in some way mystical or spiritual

BDSM as learned behaviour

21. An interest in BDSM develops when two sensations such as pain and sexual arousal occur together repeatedly over a period of time
22. An interest in BDSM develops through conditioning - a form of learning where one stimulus signals the occurrence of a particular behaviour
23. BDSM is a form of learnt behaviour
24. An interest in BDSM is the result of repeated engagement in pleasurable behaviours and stimuli

BDSM as intra-psychic

25. BDSM may be thought of as a personality trait
26. An interest in BDSM is related to a person's internal psychological processes
27. BDSM serves as a form of retribution to alleviate feelings of guilt or shame
28. BDSM can be therapeutic, for example, a 'play scene' creates an opportunity for safe and consensual expression of intense emotion

BDSM as pathology

29. An interest in BDSM is a sign of mental illness
30. An interest in BDSM is a symptom of an unhappy or abusive childhood
31. An interest in BDSM is unhealthy
32. Individuals with an interest in BDSM would benefit from psychological therapy

BDSM as patriarchy

33. BDSM is a manifestation and endorsement of patriarchal ideals
34. There is an inherent association between BDSM and Fascism: BDSM is reflective of extreme authoritarian and oppressive right-wing regimes
35. BDSM is fundamentally misogynistic and endorses maltreatment of women at the hands of men
36. BDSM only serves to reinforce patriarchal ideals

BDSM as inexplicable

37. There is no universal explanation for having an interest in BDSM
38. BDSM is too complex a phenomenon to explain in singular terms
39. Why people would engage in BDSM is puzzling
40. BDSM is incomprehensible

Pilot study

Participants

Lead supervisor, an academic and a BDSM practitioner

Aim

Objectives of the pilot included testing the functionality of the live Q-sort website, checking the clarity of instructions, the wording of statements and timing of completion.

Procedure

Participants were directed to the live website via weblink and tasked with completing the Q study as a would-be participant with the aforementioned objectives of the pilot in mind.

Amendments

- A few changes were made to the functionality of the website, for example, the addition of a pop-up window listing all statements, accessible during the post-sorting questionnaire. This was intended to facilitate responses about the statements.
- Three statements were changed as follows:
 - 1) *BDSM is mainly about having fun*
Substituted with: *BDSM is purely recreational; it doesn't need to be 'understood'*
 - 2) *BDSM defies explanation*
Substituted with: *BDSM is too complex a phenomenon to explain in singular terms*
 - 3) *There is no specific reason for having a sexual interest in BDSM*
Substituted with: *There is no universal explanation for having an interest in BDSM*
- A reminder was added as to where instructions for the sorting procedure could be accessed in the course of the procedure
- Details of the complaints procedure was added
- The timing of the study was revised up as initial estimates were too conservative

THIS APPENDIX HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE ELECTRONIC COPY

INFORMATION SHEET

WELCOME TO THE STUDY: *MAKING SENSE OF BDSM*

What is the purpose of this study?

BDSM stands for bondage and discipline, domination and submission, sadism and masochism. It may be thought of as a sexual identity and/or a range of sexual practices. BDSM has become more accessible over the past decade as a result of mainstreaming through popular media, a recent example being the erotic novel *Fifty Shades of Grey* by E.L. James. BDSM also continues to be a subject of interest in the field of psychology. BDSM is a complex phenomenon and numerous explanations of its meaning/function have been proposed. The purpose of this study is to investigate individual understandings that currently exist of BDSM in the UK.

What does participation in the study involve?

You will be asked to sort a number of descriptive statements about BDSM according to your understanding of, or the meaning that you ascribe to BDSM. The sorting task is followed by a brief questionnaire.

Is participation anonymous?

Yes, **participation is anonymous**; you will not be asked for your name. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

The questionnaire contains questions of a personal nature relating to sexual practices and sexuality. Some people may feel uncomfortable about being asked such questions. While it would be helpful if you could answer every question, you are under no obligation to do so.

How long will participation take?

Participation should take approximately 20 minutes.

What if I change my mind about participating?

You can withdraw from the study at any point by simply closing your browser. Please note that it will *not* be possible to withdraw from the study once you have submitted your responses.

What will happen to the results of this study?

The findings of this study will be submitted for publication in an academic journal and may also be presented at a conference. As participation is anonymous, participants will not be identifiable in any publication or presentation that may result from this study.

Ethical approval

This research project has been reviewed and granted full ethical approval by an independent committee at Canterbury Christ Church University. This research is conducted in accordance with the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) and Guidelines for ethical practice of research online (2007). It also complies with the Data Protection Act 1998.

(INFORMATION SHEET CONTINUED)**Software requirements**

PLEASE NOTE: The Adobe Flash programme does NOT allow you to GO BACK to a previous page of the exercise. Please do not hit the "Back" button of your browser - that would take you back to the very beginning of the study and you would lose all previous work.

This study site requires that you have the most recent version of Adobe Flash Player before continuing. If you do not have Flash Player or you need to upgrade your Flash Player you can do so by clicking this link: [Get Flash Player](#)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE STUDY: MAKING SENSE OF BDSM

If you would like to proceed with participating in this study, then please click 'Continue' below. Otherwise, close your browser to exit.

Post sorting questionnaire

- 1) The statements of the sorting task were developed from, and intended to represent existing academic and BDSM-practitioner understandings of BDSM. Please describe any understandings of BDSM that you think were *not* represented, and/or statements that you would have liked to have seen.
- 2) Please describe any statements which stood out, or were of particular personal importance to you, and your interpretation of them.
- 3) Please list the statements, if any, that did not make sense or that you did not understand.
- 4) Please describe your overall reaction to or experience of the sorting task.
- 5) Do you have any other comments that you would like to make about the task?

Questionnaire: Practitioner psychologists**1) How would you describe your gender?**

Female; Male; Transgender male; Transgender female; Queer; Other: *please describe*

2) How would you describe your sexuality?

Heterosexual; Homosexual; Bisexual; Asexual; Other: *please describe*

3) Please indicate your age range:

18 – 29; 30 – 39; 40 – 49; 50 – 59; 60 and over

4) Please indicate what type of practitioner psychologist you are:

Clinical; Counselling; Forensic; Psychotherapist

5) For how long have you been a qualified practitioner psychologist?

1 – 2 years; 3 – 5 years; 6 – 10 years; 11+ years

6) In what kind of setting do you currently work?**7) How knowledgeable do you feel on the subject BDSM?**

5 point Likert scale, from (1) Not at all knowledgeable through (5) very knowledgeable

8) Have you ever received any teaching or training on BDSM?

Yes; No; Not sure

9) Have you ever provided psychological treatment to someone who practiced BDSM?**10) Were they referred because of their BDSM practices or for another reason?****11) Have you ever practiced any form of BDSM?**

None; Experimented; Some experience; Considerable experience; Prefer not to say

Questionnaire: BDSM practitioners**1) How would you describe your gender?**

Male; Female; Transgender male; Transgender female; Queer; Other: *please describe*

2) Please indicate your age range:

18 – 29; 30 – 39; 40 – 49; 50 – 59; 60 and over

3) How would you describe your sexuality?

Heterosexual; Homosexual; Bisexual; Asexual; Other: *please describe*

4) What role do you ordinarily take in BDSM practice?

Dominant; Submission; Switch; Other: *please describe*

5) How long have you been practicing BDSM?

Less than 6 months; 6 months – 2 years; 2 – 5 years; More than 5 years

6) How often do you generally engage in BDSM practice?

At least once per week; At least once per month; At least once every three months; Less than 4 times per year

7) Please select from the following the statement that describes you best:

I only engage in, and gain satisfaction from sex that involves at least some form of BDSM

I engage in both BDSM and 'vanilla' sex, but I gain more satisfaction from BDSM sex

I engage in and gain satisfaction from both BDSM and 'vanilla' sex equally

I engage in both BDSM and 'vanilla' sex, but I gain more satisfaction from 'vanilla' sex

8) Do you think of BDSM as a sexual identity or a sexual practice?

Sexual identity; Sexual practice; Other: *please describe*

9) If you needed to see a psychologist for any reason, would it be important that they had a shared understanding about your interest in BDSM?

Yes; No; I don't know

Please say why: *please describe*

PARTICIPANT CODING**BDSM coding**Gender:

M = Male

F = Female

Q = Queer

T = Transgendered Female

O = Other (M – F Transvestite)

N = Not stated

Age range:

1 = 19-29

2 = 30 – 39

3 = 40 – 49

4 = 50 – 59

5 = 60 +

Sexual orientation (HE, HO, QU)

HE = Heterosexual

HO = Homosexual

BI = Bisexual

QU = Queer

PA = Pansexual

SM orientation (DO, SU, SW)

DO = Dominant

SU = Submissive

SW = Switch

Number

01 – 40

PP coding

Gender, Age, Sexual orientation (as above) +

Experience of BDSM?

NS = Not stated

NE = No experience

EX = Experimented

SE = Some experience

CE = Considerable experience

Number

01 – 40

From: Q Methodology Network [mailto:Q-METHOD@LISTSERV.KENT.EDU] **On Behalf Of** Steven Brown

Sent: 15 July 2013 19:12

To: Q-METHOD@LISTSERV.KENT.EDU

Subject: Re: Advice sought on best solution

I disagree that "there's not enough variance in the data to produce multiple factors": Herman van der Walt's unrotated factors already suggest that beyond the massive first factor there are still significant bipolar loadings at least out to the third factor, and these open the door to possibly interesting ideas about which some observers are in disagreement. Nor do I agree that "the conception of the concourse is too narrow": Although he has not provided us with a glimpse at his Q sample, Herman van der Walt appears to have gone to considerable lengths to assure breadth and comprehensiveness, including four statements from each of 10 components.

The "problem," if it can be considered such, is that the focus of the study and the condition of instruction are at an abstract level: The participants, all relatively sophisticated about this subject matter, are being asked to characterize it as a general concept, and I suspect that this general idea is universally comprehensible by almost anyone capable of understanding it. (This could be tested by informing a group of unknowledgeable participants about the nature of BDSM and then asking them to provide their newly-acquired understanding using the same Q sort. My guess is that they would also load significantly on the first unrotated factor.) What the first factor likely represents is a general understanding of the kind that would be found in the pertinent chapter in any textbook on abnormal psychology. (This, too, could easily be tested by asking groups of two or three psychologists to read various chapters on BDSM and to provide Q-sort representations of the conceptualization presented in each of the chapters, and then adding these to Herman van der Walt's other Q sorts.)

I don't know what the factor loadings would look like exactly were all 80 of Herman van der Walt's participants analyzed together, but taking the first 40 that were posted earlier, the second factor indicates the following individuals (all of whom are significantly associated with the first master factor) to have understandings of BDSM that depart from the general consensus, as captured by their significant bipolar loadings on factor 2:

5. -.58

12. .59

25. -.43

28. .40

And the following two individuals (also significant on the master factor) have bipolar understandings that are documented by factor 3:

26. -.50

27. .42

Herman van der Walt might find it profitable to obtain the factor scores not only for factor 1, but also factors 2 and 3, and perhaps even to return to these individuals for further interviews designed to determine the nature and origins of these understandings that are departures from the norm.

Charles Mauldin accepts as a postulate that "a one factor solution is always a failure in developing the sort," and whereas this can be the case, the existence of an overpowering single factor can also emerge from a quite broad Q sample and can provide a penetrating beam of light on societal dynamics. In one instance (Brown, 1981), a Q sample comprised of 100 names of historical and contemporary figures (drawn from a concourse of several hundred) was sorted by a sample of individuals who were instructed to rank the names from "those I regard as most appealing" to "most unappealing." For purposes of injecting representativeness into the Q sample, the

PP FACTOR ARRAYS					
Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement					
No.	Statement	No.	Factor Arrays		
			1	2	3
1	Mutual creation and maintenance of power differential	1	4	2	0
2	Unequal distribution of power is recognised and eroticised	2	2	3	-1
3	Compensate, re-enact past or present power imbalances	3	1	-3	0
4	It is consensual exchange of power	4	4	0	5
5	It is a deliberate challenge of the sexual norm	5	0	-2	2
6	Parodies undermines trad subjugating sex relations esp women	6	0	-3	2
7	Anti-conform challenge heteronorm cat of sexuality, gender	7	1	-1	3
8	Opp to conventional vanilla sex; celebration of perversity	8	0	-1	-3
9	It is about play eg roleplay scene playroom sex toys	9	2	0	3
10	It is mainly about having fun	10	0	2	-4
11	Physical and mental stimulation generates mutual pleasure	11	3	1	-2
12	Thrill-seeking behaviour not unlike extreme sports	12	2	-1	2
13	It is escape from ordinariness of everyday life	13	1	0	0
14	Mundane of everyday life is replaced by fantasy	14	1	0	1
15	Escape from burdensome, higher-level self-awareness	15	0	1	1
16	Compensates perceived lack in life eg loneliness, boredom	16	-1	-2	-1
17	Achieving altered or heightened state of consciousness	17	0	1	4
18	It is about ultimately experiencing something spiritual	18	-1	5	1
19	Creates sense of enlightenment or other-worldliness	19	0	4	2
20	BDSM high is in some way mystical or spiritual	20	-1	4	1
21	Two sensations occur together repeatedly over time	21	1	-2	1
22	BDSM develops through conditioning	22	0	-3	0
23	BDSM is a form of learnt behaviour	23	-1	1	0
24	Repeated engagement in pleasurable behaviours and stimuli	24	1	0	0
25	BDSM may be thought of as a personality trait	25	-1	-1	1
26	It is related to internal psychological processes	26	3	0	-2
27	Form of retribution to alleviate feelings of guilt or shame	27	-1	-4	-1
28	Can be therapeutic eg safe express of intense emotion	28	2	3	4
29	An interest in BDSM is a sign of mental illness	29	-5	-5	-3
30	It is symptomatic of an unhappy or abusive childhood	30	-3	-1	-1
31	An interest in BDSM is unhealthy	31	-3	-1	-4
32	BDSM practitioners would benefit from psychological therapy	32	-2	-4	-2
33	It is a manifestation and endorsement of patriarchal ideals	33	-2	-2	0
34	It is fascist like authoritarian oppressive right-wing regim	34	-4	1	3
35	It is misogynistic and endorses maltreatment of women by men	35	-3	0	-1
36	BDSM only serves to reinforce patriarchal ideals	36	-2	0	0
37	There is no specific reason for sexual interest in BDSM	37	5	3	-3
38	BDSM defies explanation	38	3	2	-2
39	Why people would engage in BDSM is puzzling	39	-2	1	-5
40	BDSM is incomprehensible	40	-4	1	-1

BDSM FACTOR ARRAYS
Factor Q-Sort Values for Each Statement

No.	Statement	No.	Factor Arrays		
			1	2	3
1	Mutual creation and maintenance of power differential	1	2	0	-1
2	Unequal distribution of power is recognised and eroticised	2	1	-5	1
3	Compensate, re-enact past or present power imbalances	3	-1	0	-1
4	It is consensual exchange of power	4	4	1	2
5	It is a deliberate challenge of the sexual norm	5	0	0	0
6	Parodies undermines trad subjugating sex relations esp women	6	0	0	-1
7	Anti-conform challenge heteronorm cat of sexuality, gender	7	1	0	0
8	Opp to conventional vanilla sex; celebration of perversity	8	0	-4	0
9	It is about play eg roleplay scene playroom sex toys	9	2	-3	0
10	It is mainly about having fun	10	1	1	0
11	Physical and mental stimulation generates mutual pleasure	11	5	2	-2
12	Thrill-seeking behaviour not unlike extreme sports	12	3	1	1
13	It is escape from ordinariness of everyday life	13	1	2	-1
14	Mundane of everyday life is replaced by fantasy	14	2	-2	2
15	Escape from burdensome, higher-level self-awareness	15	2	1	-2
16	Compensates perceived lack in life eg loneliness, boredom	16	-1	-2	-2
17	Achieving altered or heightened state of consciousness	17	0	3	3
18	It is about ultimately experiencing something spiritual	18	-1	3	4
19	Creates sense of enlightenment or other-worldliness	19	1	3	3
20	BDSM high is in some way mystical or spiritual	20	0	4	5
21	Two sensations occur together repeatedly over time	21	0	1	2
22	BDSM develops through conditioning	22	-1	0	3
23	BDSM is a form of learnt behaviour	23	-1	0	1
24	Repeated engagement in pleasurable behaviours and stimuli	24	0	-2	4
25	BDSM may be thought of as a personality trait	25	0	4	-1
26	It is related to internal psychological processes	26	1	2	-2
27	Form of retribution to alleviate feelings of guilt or shame	27	-1	-1	-3
28	Can be therapeutic eg safe express of intense emotion	28	3	0	1
29	An interest in BDSM is a sign of mental illness	29	-5	-1	-4
30	It is symptomatic of an unhappy or abusive childhood	30	-3	2	-4
31	An interest in BDSM is unhealthy	31	-4	-1	-3
32	BDSM practitioners would benefit from psychological therapy	32	-3	-3	-5
33	It is a manifestation and endorsement of patriarchal ideals	33	-3	-1	0
34	It is fascist like authoritarian oppressive right-wing regim	34	-2	-1	1
35	It is misogynistic and endorses maltreatment of women by men	35	-4	-4	0
36	BDSM only serves to reinforce patriarchal ideals	36	-2	-3	1
37	There is no specific reason for sexual interest in BDSM	37	3	1	-3
38	BDSM defies explanation	38	4	5	0
39	Why people would engage in BDSM is puzzling	39	-2	-1	-1
40	BDSM is incomprehensible	40	-2	-2	2

CRIBSHEET

BDSM Component 1

Items ranked extreme positive (+5)

11 Physical and mental stimulation generates mutual pleasure

Items ranked higher in F1 array than in other arrays

- 4 It is consensual exchange of power +4
- 28 Can be therapeutic eg safe express of intense emotion +3
- 37 There is no universal explanation for having an interest in BDSM +3
- 12 Thrill-seeking behaviour not unlike extreme sports +3
- 1 Mutual creation and maintenance of power differential +2
- 9 It is about play eg roleplay scene playroom sex toys +2
- 15 Escape from burdensome, higher-level self-awareness +2
- 7 Anti-conform challenge heteronorm cat of sexuality, gender +1

Items ranked lower in F1 array than in other arrays

- 19 Creates sense of enlightenment or other-worldliness 1
- 20 BDSM high is in some way mystical or spiritual 0
- 17 Achieving altered or heightened state of consciousness 0
- 21 Two sensations occur together repeatedly over time 0
- 22 BDSM develops through conditioning -1
- 23 BDSM is a form of learnt behaviour -1
- 18 It is about ultimately experiencing something spiritual -1
- 34 It is fascist like authoritarian oppressive right-wing regim -2
- 39 Why people would engage in BDSM is puzzling -2
- 33 It is a manifestation and endorsement of patriarchal ideals -3
- 31 An interest in BDSM is unhealthy -4

Items ranked extreme negative (-5)

29 An interest in BDSM is a sign of mental illness

THIS APPENDIX HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM THE ELECTRONIC COPY