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Bound in Theory and Practice: A Mixed-Methods Exploration of Consensual Sadomasochism

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BOUND IN THEORY AND PRACTICE:

A MIXED-METHODS EXPLORATION OF CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISM

by

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Bound in Theory and Practice: A Mixed-Methods Exploration of Consensual Sadomasochism

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This mixed-methods dissertation is an exploration of bodily experiences of difference and contradiction for consensual sadomasochists. With the data from an on-line survey completed by 259 self-identified consensual sadomasochists and 25 in-depth, semi-structured interviews, I explore the ways in which these participants explain their participation in consensual sadomasochism (CS) in three different, but related facets of their lives. First, I test the relationships between participants' genders, sexual orientations, and CS role performances to try and elucidate how consensual sadomasochists use their bodies to perform masculinity and femininity outside of heteronormative standards. Here, I specifically use feminist and queer theoretical perspectives to discuss the implications of being able to switch from dominant to submissive roles for subverting heteronormativity. I also use these frameworks to explore sexual objectification in the second data chapter. In this chapter consensual sadomasochists describe sexual objectification as beneficial for their own body-satisfaction as well as how this sexual objectification has helped them come to terms with their experiences and feelings of difference. Finally, I discuss participants' experiences with race and class using critical race theories that are also attentive to experiences of difference. This framework allows for the examination of participants' discourses around race and ethnicity, as well as class, within their CS communities. Overall, these explorations into gendered, sexualized, raced, and classed experiences of difference for consensual sadomasochists reveal the importance of the participants' bodies in deconstructing and subverting heteronormative conceptions of these very characteristics.

This dissertation is dedicated to "The Perverts."

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First and foremost, I would like to thank all of my participants. As a group of individuals who practice sexually "deviant" activities, getting involved in social research can be worrisome, especially given the trends in early sexuality research and its penchant for pathologizing those with alternative sexualities and their communities; their participation in this study, therefore, is greatly appreciated. On the same note, I would like to thank all of those who made comments about the on-line survey; their feedback was invaluable for improving this study.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Nearly 20 years ago, "Operation Spanner" occurred in which British courts prosecuted 16 homosexual and bisexual men when a videotape of their consensual sadomasochistic (CS)[1] activities accidentally fell into police custody. Although all participants consented to the activities, the courts described their behaviors as a "cult of violence" that needed to be diminished in society (Pa 2002: 69). In December 1990, the courts charged the men with assault, aiding and abetting assault, and keeping a disorderly home; they received anywhere from 12 months to four and a half years in jail, probation, and fines (White 2006). Their sentences were more severe than penalties for "violent, nonconsensual rape or battery, or for assaults against gays or lesbians," which is a direct reflection of heterosexist courts' tendencies to describe CS toys as dangerous weapons (Pa 2002: 72).

White (2006) claims the court's decision to convict the men stemmed from the cultural notion that sadomasochistic activities cannot involve love and thus are not socially acceptable forms of sexual pleasure. Furthermore, CS activities between men were also implicated in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, largely to do with the perception that "pathological" behaviors such as CS, involve "sick" individuals (i.e., HIV/AIDS carriers). In fact, the Attorney General of England

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[1] Scholars vary in the label they use for these behaviors, including consensual sadomasochism (CS), bondage and discipline, dominance and submission (BDSM), and sadomasochism (SM). In addition, participants vary in the label they use for themselves, often times referring to themselves as "kinky" rather than sadomasochistic. For simplicity, in this paper I consistently use the term consensual sadomasochists and CS to refer to the participants and the practices of consensual sadomasochism. I do, however, use alternate labels presented by participants when they have asked me to do so. An asterisk and a footnote explaining the participant's reasoning for the alternate label follow each new label.

claimed these men were prosecuted in the interest of preventing the spread of AIDS and because, "S/M homosexual activity cannot be regarded as beneficial to 'the enhancement or enjoyment of family life or conducive to the welfare of society'" (Pa 2002: 71). Accordingly, Taylor (1997: 108) argues that individuals prosecuted for involvement in CS activities experience pathologization and criminalization "dependent upon the degree to which the behaviours [sic] are politically dissident and undermining of hegemonic notions of 'normal sex'."[2]

Normative notions of sex are not limited to Great Britain. In several U.S. cases occurring post-Operation Spanner, the right to practice sexual activities in the privacy of one's home was ruled secondary to the State's right to intervene in relationships to "prevent violence." One prosecutor of a criminal case involving a sadist and masochist involved in a master/slave relationship even charged the sadist with "terroristic threats" (Egan 2007: 1635). In this particular incident (*State v. Van*), the master and slave entered into a CS relationship in 2001 that they both defined as "without limits" and "permanent"; the master locked his male slave in a "dungeon," refusing to let him leave because he had been directed to do so in earlier correspondences with the slave. What was unusual about this particular relationship in relation to other CS relationships was that without limits, the slave had not negotiated a "safe-word" with the master and could therefore not signal to his master to stop whenever he became uncomfortable with his situation. The master was, therefore, prosecuted for these consensual relations.

According to Egan (2007: 1638), CS practitioners experience "disproportionately severe sentences" in court because their activities are viewed as socially unacceptable and immoral, as has been evident in media representations of consensual sadomasochism (also see Beckman

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[2] Both Taylor (1997) and White (2006) use Foucault to describe how discourses about pathology function to create and perpetuate inequitable relations between groups of individuals.

2001, Weiss 2006, and Wright 2006). Since at least the 19th century, CS activities have been regarded as "abnormal," "sick," and "immoral." In fact, during the 19th century the medical community, both in the US and abroad, diagnosed sadomasochism as a sexual pathology. Beforehand, the practices received little legal attention, although early sexologists (i.e., Freud, Hirschfield, and Ellis) described female masochism and male sadism as "excesses of the normal sexual impulse," while female sadism and male masochism were described as "perversions" of the "natural order" (Taylor 1997: 110).[3]

The official labeling of sadomasochistic behaviors as pathologies in the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) emphasizes the importance of the social construction of pathologies; for Taylor (1997), sadomasochism is merely a label and "manufactured illness" (120). As suggested by Reiersol and Skeid, (2006), there are many problems with the diagnoses of sadomasochism as pathology, particularly in the ICD, including: (1) the confounding of statistical data with moral judgments, (2) methodological shortcomings and empirical research findings that suffer from reliability and validity issues, (3) diagnosis often combines consensual and nonconsensual sexual behaviors, (4) diagnosis is based on traditional viewpoints recognizing sexual activity as for procreation only, and (5) diagnosis can be used to pathologize a coping strategy or adaptive behavior. The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF: np) has also suggested that:

> Statements currently within the DSM Paraphilias criteria are contradicted by
> scientific evidence, therefore NCSF must conclude that the interpretation of the
> Paraphilias criteria has been politically – not scientifically – based. This

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[3] Thompson (1994) explains that these early theories of sadomasochism were a sign of their times in which most sexual practices were considered immoral. In addition, he critiques Freud by claiming that "the more Freud said [about sadomasochism], the less sense he made" and "At best, all Freud really achieved was to stigmatize sadomasochism at the very time others were trying to make society come to terms with itself" (42 and 48). Stoller (1991: 5) also calls Freudian theories of sadomasochism "boiled water masquerading as gourmet's delight."

politically motivated interpretation subjects BDSM practitioners, fetishists and cross-dressers to bias, discrimination and social sanctions without any scientific basis.

The NCSF, therefore, created a committee in 2009 to petition the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to depathologize "alternative sexual behaviors," including consensual sadomasochism, in the DSM-V to be released in 2013; as of February 16, 2010 the APA Subworkgroup has agreed that "paraphilias are not ipso facto psychiatric disorders" and "are proposing that the DSM-V make a distinction between paraphilias and paraphilic disorders" (National Coalition for Sexual Freedom 2010: np).

Despite these very important and recent moves to depathologize consensual sadomasochism, two main groups of CS participants have formed: those, like the NCSF, who would like for general society to accept CS as normative, and those who would like for general society to accept CS as non-normative, with the first group emphasizing sameness and the second emphasizing difference (Weiss 2008). The issue that gets removed from this debate about whether CS participants should be treated as similar or different to the general population is how CS participants actually experience difference and contradiction within their own practices and interactions. More so, the extant research about CS has focused so much on explaining and depathologizing CS that it is unclear what forms of intra-group differences exist among CS participants. These differences are particularly important to understand considering that they can affect an individual's sense of belonging as well as self-concept. It is for this reason that I began this research: I wanted to know how consensual sadomasochists explained their interactions in CS, and whether these interactions had a significant effect on their bodily experiences of difference.

As I attempt to answer this query about the embodied experience of consensual sadomasochists throughout this dissertation, I pay particular attention to the ways in which gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, and class shape each participant's CS experience of difference. Studies of difference are particularly important to sociologists interested in the sociology of the body. These groups of scholars have explored issues surrounding bodies as diverse as the regulation and disciplining of bodies (Bordo 1989; Foucault 1977, 1978) to phenomenological experiences of bodies (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Young 2005) that are raced, classed, gendered, and sexualized. These scholars have found that the body is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and as sociologists, we are required to understand its source of self-identity (e.g., experiences, feelings, perceptions), and how it comes to understand its own self-identity (Shilling 2003). Examining consensual sadomasochists' experiences of their bodies provides a particularly unique opportunity for understanding the sociology of bodies considering consensual sadomasochists' use of their eroticized bodies for pleasure through non-normative means.

Given that little is known about bodily experiences of difference within sexually "deviant" subcultures, such as CS, I explore these experiences throughout the rest of this dissertation. I begin with a brief description of CS and the concepts that I will continue to use throughout this paper. In addition, I discuss CS role preferences amongst consensual sadomasochists in order to elucidate the relationship between these preferences and the participants' gender and sexual orientations, as well as the implication of these preferences for their self-concepts. I also test the limits of self-objectification theory by examining the levels of body-surveillance, body-shame, and body (dis)satisfaction amongst CS participants. This chapter is necessary in the examination of CS bodily experiences given that sexual

objectification is particularly problematic for women's self-concepts. More specifically, sexual objectification is a consequent reminder to women that they have lower statuses in Western cultures, largely to do with their bodies. Finally, I investigate the role of race and class in consensual sadomasochists' experiences of community and sense of belonging. My overall goal for this study is to expand upon sociological research of bodies and "alternative sexualities" by combining sociological theories that are often explored separately (e.g., constructionism and phenomenology).

DEFINING CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISM (CS)

Consensual sadomasochism (CS) is consensual sexual role-playing "involving the infliction of pain or intense sensation, use of restraint, or power exchange" (Lawrence and Love-Crowell 2008: 67) and the "ritualization of dominance and submission" (Weinberg 2006: 33). Despite its pathologization in the DSM mid-1950s, CS did not receive academic attention in the U.S. until the 1980s and 1990s when radical feminists charged CS with reinforcing patriarchy and violence, and claimed that women as an oppressed group with internalized sexism were unable to freely consent to sex that subordinated them to men, caused them pain, and (further) disempowered them (e.g., Hopkins 1994; MacKinnon 1997; Mansfield 1997; Saxe 1992). Once this claim was made, however, theorists and researchers alike began studying CS environments, relationships, and discourses. In the following sections, I review the literature of CS practices as well as theoretical accounts of consensual sadomasochism.

Consensual Sadomasochism in Practice

Although there is not a huge body of scholarship on CS, the existing research is surprisingly diverse in terms of methods and it is quite global. For example, methods to study CS include autoethnographies and experiential data (Butler 1998; Moser 1998; Moser and Madeson 1996; Newmahr 2008; Stoller 1991; Taylor and Ussher 2001), content analyses (Ernulf and Innala 1995; Weinberg 1983), case studies (Kamel and Weinberg 1983; Kleinplatz 2006; Weille 2002), interviews (Beckman 2001; Lawrence and Love-Crowell 2008; Mosher, Levitt, and Manley 2006), questionnaires/surveys (Breslow, Evans, and Langley 1985; Cross and Matheson 2006; Dancer, Kleinplatz, and Moser 2006; Gosselin and Wilson 1980; Kolmes, Stock, and Moser 2006; Moser and Levitt 1987; Nordling, Sandnabba, and Santtila 2000; Nordling et al. 2006; Richters et al. 2008; Sandnabba, Santtila, and Nordling 1999; Sandnabba et al. 2002), and theoretical accounts (Scruton 1986; Taylor 1997; Thompson 1994; Weeks 1985; Williams 2006). In addition, CS research has been conducted in Australia (Richters et al. 2008), England (Gosselin and Wilson 1980; Taylor and Ussher 2001), Finland (Nordling et al. 2000; Nordling et al. 2006; Sandnabba et al. 1999; Santilla et al. 2002), and West Germany (Spengler 1977), as well as in the United States (Kleinplatz 2006; Lawrence and Love-Crowell 2008; Weille 2002; Yost 2007).

Some of this research was conducted to help depathologize CS, and in doing so focused more on CS practices than how sadomasochistic participants' personal characteristics are related to their practices (e.g., Gosselin and Wilson 1980; Taylor and Ussher 2001; Richters et al. 2008). Research on CS practices finds them scripted, collaboratively produced, and highly symbolic

(Weinberg 2006). In addition, there are various types of play[4] and subcultures surrounding these types of play. For instance, there are specific subcultures devoted to bondage and discipline (Ernulf and Innala 1995) and SM slavery (Dancer et al. 2006), which focus on different levels of power exchange and use different devices and clothing. In addition, there are subcultures devoted specifically to gay leather men (Kamel 1983; Mosher et al. 2006), leatherdyke boys (Hale 1997; Rubin 1987), and transsexual sadomasochists (Stryker 2008). Accordingly, "SM is multifaceted, its expression takes a variety of forms along a number of continuums, it is credited with differing degrees of importance and it is expressed within widely different interpersonal contexts" (Taylor and Ussher 2001: 302). In addition, individuals may adopt dominant or submissive roles, but the meanings they attach to these roles and the way they enact these roles can vary greatly (Moser and Kleinplatz 2007).

Consensual Sadomasochism in Theory

The "Sex Wars"

Consensual sadomasochism became particularly visible during the early 1980's feminist "Sex Wars," when a group of radical feminists came together to write about the problems with consensual sadomasochistic play. The book they created—A*gainst Sadomasochism: A Radical Feminist Analysis (1982)*—was a response to *Coming to Power (1981),* written by a lesbian-feminist SM support group named Samois. Radical feminists Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia were integral members and founders of Samois, and claimed that CS was a legitimate expression of sexuality. On the other hand, those involved in the anti-SM camp claimed that sadomasochism, regardless of consent, is inherently violent (MacKinnon 1997; Mansfield 1997; Saxe 1992)

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[4] "Play" in this context refers to any consensual activity involving bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism, masochism, role-play, control, and surrender between adults

because: (1) it "replicates patriarchal relationships" by treating women as objects, (2) one cannot consent to activities that eroticize dominance, submission, pain, or powerlessness because oppression has already been internalized in women, and (3) it "validates and supports patriarchy" (Hopkins 1994: 118).

Califia (1994: 168), in response to feminist critiques of CS, states, "Sadomasochism is not a form of sexual assault. It is a consensual activity that involves polarized roles and intense sensations." Consensual sadomasochism differs from other forms of sexual activity in that it is entirely about fantasy because the role taken on is not "the sum total of [one's] being" (168). And, because CS roles do not assign nonconsensual "privileges based on race, gender, and social class," this sort of behavior is not unjust; one may switch roles in SM, but not in other facets of life (169). "S/M is more a parody of the hidden sexual nature of fascism than it is a worship of or acquiescence to it" (170). It is also about the exchange of power and ritualization of dominance, rather than pain (Califia 1994; Dancer et al. 2006; Nichols 2006; Weeks 1985; Weinberg 2006).

> Although many critics of SM would claim that the staging of sexual scenes featuring "masters" and "slaves" simply duplicates the most bleakly unequal power structures experienced in the everyday world, Foucault argues to the contrary that SM turns those binary power differences against themselves by allowing participants in this "strategic game" to take control of the erotic charge factored into domination and subordination...consensual sexual practices of this kind involve complex exchanges of erotic power that may be unintelligible to outsiders (Bristow 1997: 188).

For many defenders of CS, the power dynamics and participant motivations are different than in traditional sexual scenarios, particularly because participants negotiate CS "scenes" or periods of CS activity (Archard 1998).

Simulation versus Replication

Hart (1998) claims that one of the problems that some feminists may have with the idea that women, in particular, perform a submissive role is that they fail to fully understand performativity. She cites de Beauvoir to suggest, "it is not that the body is transformed into flesh in sadomasochism; rather, as I have tried to show, it is that sadomasochistic practice partakes in the paradoxical structure of the Real" (67). Performativity thus represents a sort of play on the "real" relationships between dominants and submissives in society, but the performance also disrupts and reconfigures dominant cultural meanings (especially when performed by gender queer individuals as is discussed by Hale (1997)).

Defenders of consensual sadomasochism make the distinction between simulation and replication to suggest that the appearance of dominance and submission in CS play does not necessarily represent the dominance and submission involved in dominant gender relations. These theorists describe CS as simulation (Hornsby 1999), theater/performance (O'Neill 1989; Weinberg 1983), and dramatized expression (Stoller 1991). Because CS involves power exchange between the top and bottom or any number of other poled-power relationships, "passivity can be a (covert) way of controlling" and vise versa (Stoller 1991: 15). "Consensual sadomasochism is theater—an amusement park—not only in its pornography but in its playgrounds in the real world" (17). There are ritualized ways of setting the scene and any part of the body can become a specialized part of the scene. An illusion of danger may exist, but so do previously agreed upon limits. Consensual sadomasochism, thus, is a "simulation of harm," and humiliation is an imitation (19).

The context of the play scene is important for distinguishing between simulation and replication. Things such as community[5], rules, and safe-words make this context different than a replication of patriarchal activity. "In SM 'slave' and 'master' scenes…the 'slave' may reject the 'master' (or 'mistress') because she is not dominant enough, not experienced enough, not skillful enough to satisfy the 'slave's desires'" (Hopkins 1994: 124). Also, desire plays an important role in that the submissive can have a direct desire for the simulation rather than the actual activity. The thing that makes CS play most like simulation, however, is the consent involved; it involves negotiation and mutual pleasure (Pa 2002). There are three basic claims as to why the consensual nature of BDSM has been ignored by feminists and court systems alike: (1) the pathologization of BDSM practitioners in the 19th century has conflated consensual and non-consensual activities (Langdridge 2006), (2) "Liberal formulations of 'consent' ignore how patriarchal institutions create inequalities of power that make voluntary consent impossible" (Pa 2002: 88), and (3) laws for sexual consent have been based off of Victorian values and ideals of how one should behave—based on morality—rather than the person's right to consent (Egan 2007).

Consent

Perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of CS is the requirement of ensuring the *consensual* nature of the acts. Indeed, often times the state uses the excuse of protecting participants from themselves in order to practice control over them (Herman 2007). More so, non-CS participants have difficulty understanding how an individual can experience pain as pleasure (Stoller 1991). Looking at the neuropsychological and anthropological theories of CS,

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[5] Although not all consensual sadomasochists identify as part of the larger CS community (Langdridge 2006), and only participate in CS for leisure (Williams 2006), those who are involved in a CS community have particular types of clothing, behaviors, and socializing.

Taylor (1997: 115) finds that pain "may provide a general excitement, which can amplify sexual feelings," and pain and pleasure are a false dichotomy. For instance, some people have the same response to pain as to orgasm; both activities release opiate-like endorphins in the brain. Likewise, some consensual sadomasochists discuss very different reasons for engaging in CS, which is elaborated upon further in Chapter 4. Still, the misconceptions of CS are largely linked to this confusion as to how individuals can experience pleasure from pain.

Nichols (2006) specifically lists seven misconceptions of CS and responds to them with the following critiques: (1) SM play is negotiated, so is not only about the dominant feeling pleasure without regard for the submissive; (2) pain may be involved in CS play, but it is not the typical type of pain (physical) we normally think of; (3) behaviors do not become addictive, but tend to level off; (4) CS play is not self-destructive, rather it is therapeutic when controlled; (5) there is no proof that consensual sadomasochistic behaviors stem from childhood abuse; (6) rather than being an avoidance of intimacy, CS play can improve relations with the added emphasis of better communication practices; and (7) CS play is not separate from "vanilla" or traditional forms of sex because CS participants often engage in both forms of sexual activity. Overall, this theoretical work reveals individuals involved in CS, at any level, experience consensual sadomasochism differently and for different reasons.

EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

In this paper, I argue that consensual sadomasochists also experience intra-group difference and contradiction, which can be most easily examined through a detailed analysis of participants' experiences of their bodies, both lived and socially constructed. This study, therefore, has great significance for learning about and documenting how CS participants

experience difference and contradiction within their own practices and interactions from a sociological framework. As such, I take an interdisciplinary approach to theorizing embodiment, engaging with four particular theorists (Bourdieu 1986; Butler 2004; Muñoz 1999; and Warner 1993) who address embodiment from sociological, feminist, and queer perspectives. All four of these theorists' works are utilized in Chapters 3 through 5 to discuss CS role performance, CS sexual objectification, and the discourses surrounding race and ethnicity in CS play. Before discussing the methodology of this dissertation, I first describe each of the above theorist's contributions to current understandings of bodies more broadly, incorporating their specific discussions of performance, value/capital, and difference to explore embodied experience.

<div align="center">Performative Bodies</div>

Butler's (1993a) theorization of performativity has been of particular concern for feminist theorists; Shilling (2003) claims that the "fleshy physicality of our embodied being" is ignored when theorists such as Butler describe the gendered body as being performance. Moreover, the "body is made subordinate as an object of culture" when language and culture are privileged over bodies (Budgeon 2003: 42). Howson (2005: 113) explains that Butler tries to deconstruct Cartesian mind/body dualisms (and more specifically materiality and language) "in ways that have the effect of reducing the material to discourse"; she does so by methodologically privileging deconstruction in her earlier works. Additionally, Butler avoids the body as a lived experience because she tries to avoid linking femininity with materiality (Hughes and Witz 1997). It is not until *Undoing Gender* that Butler (2004) refocuses her attention on social practices and lived experience; it is here that she examines the body as the site of action and the site where things are acted upon. She also addresses earlier critiques and asserts: "speaking is a

bodily act" and a "stylized assertion" of the body and therefore disrupts Cartesian mind/body dualisms (172).

In her later discussions of performativity, Butler explains that bodies are both active and passive, both social and subjective. Although these works have contributed greatly to sociological and feminist understandings of inscribed and regulated bodies, they fall short of being able to explain the significance of performing queerness in public. For a better understanding of these particular performances, I turn to Muñoz' (1999) analysis of queer performances, or performances of difference. He explains that queer performances/spectacles allow those viewing the performance (who are also often queer) to "imagine a world where queer lives, politics, and possibilities are representable in their complexity" (i). This understanding of queer performance is particularly important to this study, and more so Chapters 3 and 4, because I explore the ways in which consensual sadomasochists, who often self-identify as queer or at least identify with queer politics[6], explain their CS performances and experiences with sexual objectification in gender subversive terms.

According to Warner (1993: xiii), to identify as queer means that one "knows in one way or another that her stigmatization is connected with gender…nature and culture…racial and national fantasy…and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body." Because queer self-understanding relies upon this knowledge, it also allows for the queer performer to challenge these institutions. For instance, Muñoz (1999: i) suggests that spectacles "offer the minoritarian subject a space to situate itself in history and thus seize social agency." Contrary to popular belief, then, consensual sadomasochists play within a context that allows for the reconfiguring of

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[6] Warner (1993) explains, "The preference for 'queer' represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal" (xxvi).

dominant and submissive performances that are at times unrelated to heteronormative conceptions of dominance and submission in which men dominate women. Butler, Muñoz and Warner thus provide the perfect analyses of queer performances to be further discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. For Chapter 5, I more specifically focus on race/ethnicity and class as social capital, and therefore utilize the theories produced by Bourdieu (1986) and expanded upon by other theorists (i.e., Lipsitz 1998; Puar 2007).

Valued Bodies

Bourdieu (1986) was best known for his work on capital, which focused on lived rather than constructed experience; he furthered the project of the lived body by claiming that thought *is* bodily knowledge (Howson 2005). According to Hoy (1999: 4), Bourdieu saw "comportment as predominantly configured by the social structures (the 'habitus') and bodily orientation (or 'hexis') that individuals acquire through their upbringing in a particular culture or class." Therefore Bourdieu's "habitus" adds the social dimension to Merleau-Ponty's theory of embodiment, and also recognizes the body as an active participant in the social world. Most important to this study, however, is Bourdieu's (1986) conceptualization of embodied capital, or the embodiment of a race and class-based culture; accordingly, cultural structures classify bodies, which are thus given specific values/capital according to specific bodily characteristics. For instance, Bordo (1991) explains, "not every body will do" in a culture that places values on bodies because some bodies have more value in Western cultures than others based on their color, size, and shape. According to scholars, white bodies have value in Western cultures (Lipsitz 1998) while this same culture produces non-white bodies as deviant (Fausto-Sterling 2005) and the "image of Otherness" (hooks 1997: 114), therefore having less value. In Chapter

5, I argue that capital (whether economic, cultural or social) affects consensual sadomasochists experiences of their bodies such that some experience difference to the extent that they exclude themselves from participating in CS in public settings.

Experiencing bodily difference, therefore, is particularly important considering the claim made by Califia (1994) that consensual sadomasochists make use of their entire bodies in addition to Nussbaum's (1995) assertion that consensual sadomasochists experience objectification as autonomy. Both Califia and Nussbaum emphasized the importance of bodies and experiences in CS, which brings to question whether and how consensual sadomasochists experience difference related to their bodies. In order to tease apart any differences experienced by consensual sadomasochists, I use Bourdieu's multiple theories of capital to explore how participants explain their own participation in a CS community as well as the lack of ethnic minorities within the larger CS community. In this chapter, I also explore Puar's (2007) concept of "homonationalism" and its relationship to ethnic minority exclusion within CS communities.

Puar explained homonationalism as the maintenance of insider/outsider categorizations in order to preserve a "liberal" status, in which queers and ethnic minorities are relegated to the "outsider" status. What this means is that, as described by Warner (1993: xvii), "the institutions of queer culture have been dominated by those with capital: typically, middle-class white men." What is different about Puar's explanation of homonationalism from these earlier theories of difference, however, is that Puar explicitly links homonationalism with terrorism. Moreover, she claims that certain feared objects (i.e., the Sikh turban) become "assemblages" or are fused with the body, such that the person *becomes* the object or the "queer figuration" that is situated as the terrorist or non-normative body. And, because sex and gender scripts continue to change, the queer as well as the terrorist are also always in a state of becoming and state of tension with

heteronormativity. Puar, thus, expands upon earlier theories of difference using a poststructualist framework. Similarly, I use a poststructuralist framework to explain the ways in which the queer is in a state of tension with heteronormativity by suggesting that this tension is largely due to the discrepancies between discourses and experiences of race and ethnicity within CS communities. Therefore, both Warner and Puar are important for exploring consensual sadomasochism where the majority of the participants self-identify as middle- to upper-class and White/Caucasian. Any experiences of difference for consensual sadomasochists relating to race/ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality, then, are important to understand, although with prudence to the ways in which this difference operates in the CS context.

<p align="center">Historicizing Experience</p>

Scott (1992) cautioned against naturalizing difference. She states, "The evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world" (25). Scott therefore claimed that in addition to making experience visible, it is critical to "attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences" (25). Similarly, Marshall (1999) noted that we must be careful with what we read into experiences, because they are situated upon lived experience as well as cultural definitions of the situation. She states, "When we try to name our bodily experiences, we are always involved in a dialogue" that is influenced by the "descriptions and prescriptions of the experts" (71). Both Scott and Marshall, like me, call for the historicization of experience, and thus the title of this section (as borrowed from Scott).

My attempt at historicizing experience in this study comes as an interdisciplinary undertaking in which I combine theories of performance (Butler 2004; Muñoz 1999; Warner 1993) with those of value/capital (Bourdieu 1986) to understand consensual sadomasochist's experiences. Although I discuss these concepts separately throughout my data chapters, I posit that they are intimately connected to one another. For example, Howson (2005) explained, specific to the embodiment of gender, gender performance is supported and even encouraged (with capital) through the acquisition of habits and through developing the knowledge that some habits are more appropriate than others; hence, performance is directly related to capital.

To historicize experience also requires being attentive to the situation and context of the language used to explain experience. "Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* is in need of interpretation" (Scott 1992: 37). In this study, I historicize experience using a mixed-methods approach that draws on the participants' stories of CS practices to support and/or refute the quantitative data; in doing so, I de-center the fixity of the quantitative data and allow for a re-interpretation of both this data as well as the participants' stories.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

In the following six chapters I investigate the various components of CS play that the participants in this study experienced as difference and contradiction. These components—made up of CS role performance, self-objectification, and capital—reveal the complexities of consensual sadomasochism, but also its potential for creating a space in which individuals can celebrate their differences and contradictions. In the first of these chapters, I explain the mixed-methods approach that I use to explore CS discourses and practices; this approach specifically allows me to examine embodiment as well as discipline in the study participants' lives.

The next three chapters reveal the findings of this study, specifically focusing on participants' genders, sexual orientations, races/ethnicities, and classes and the ways in which these embodied characteristics influence their CS experiences. In Chapter 3, I explain CS participants' role performances in relation to their genders, sexual orientations, and CS identities. This chapter specifically focuses on the performative aspects of CS roles as well as gender and sexual orientations to elaborate on the ways in which consensual sadomasochists perform dominance and submission. In this chapter I explore performativity and its relationship to experiences of difference for participants.

In Chapter 4, I examine the relationships between the participants' self-objectification, body-surveillance, body-shame, and body (dis)satisfaction measures. In addition to analyzing the quantitative data for the first two chapters, I also provide an analysis of the ways in which interviewees discussed their role performances and their experiences with sexual objectification; these stories often contradict the quantitative data, but reveal a great deal of information about phenomenological experiences of difference that the survey could not capture.

The final data chapter, Chapter 5, investigates the ways in which participants discussed their own experiences with race, ethnicity, and class in CS communities. Of particular interest in this chapter is how these participants' discourses related to theories of social and cultural capital, which in return explain race relations as dependent upon difference.

In the concluding chapter, Chapter 6, I review all of the major findings and discuss the theoretical implications of this study. This chapter also includes a conversation about the value of using more inclusive theoretical frameworks (i.e., structuration theories) and methods (i.e., mixed-methods) to explore practices and identities as complex as consensual sadomasochism. And, despite these more inclusive ways of discussing CS, I also explain the limitations of this

study that are also related to the methods and theories used, as well as my own positionality.

This concluding chapter ends with my recommendations for further research in "alternative

sexualities" and more specifically the CS experience.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODS

In the previous chapter, I described my interdisciplinary approach to exploring some of the things that are important for consensual sadomasochists (CS) experiences of difference and contradiction in CS play, including: performativity, queerity[7], and value/capital. I discussed how specific concepts from Butler (2004), Bourdieu (1986), Muñoz (1999), and Warner (1993) would be used in this paper. Overall, I proposed the combination of all three theorists to adequately historicize experience and embodiment; any one of these theorists taken alone were insufficient for understanding the very complex relationship that consensual sadomasochists have with their bodies given that they are purported to use the entire body for pleasure and experience objectification as autonomy.

In this chapter, I explain my mixed-methods approach[8] to studying consensual sadomasochists' embodied experiences of gender, sexual orientation, race and class differences. My decision to take up such an approach comes from my understanding that "when both quantitative and qualitative data are included in a study, researchers may enrich their results in ways that one form of data does not allow" (Hanson et al. 2005: 224). Consequently, the survey utilized in this study may not provide much information about embodiment, while the semi-structured interviews may do a better job of this. In an effort to avoid privileging one form of

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[7] Although the origin of this term is obscure, I use this term throughout this paper in the sense of "opposite to heteronormativity." In other words, queerity is the normalization of a queer lifestyle that actively seeks to deconstruct gender and sex norms.

[8] I also like to think of this approach as a queer methodology. Halberstam (1998: 13) states, "A queer methodology, in a way, is a scavenger methodology that uses different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior."

data collection over another, however, I also take the stance that to study embodiment is to employ a "methodological attitude that demands attention to bodiliness even in purely verbal data such as written text or oral interview" (Csordas 1999: 148). I, therefore, read both survey data and interviews as expressions of embodiment that must be historicized. Again, this is accomplished by asking questions such as: who is present in the experience and who is involved in the (re)creation of the body? Also, where is the body? (Marshall 1999). More so, how are these embodied experiences situated within discourses? "[W]ork casting the body as both a symbolic and a material product of social relations—a construct that is necessarily conditioned by a whole range of structural forces—has provided an especially important way of re-framing recent research on sexuality, sexual cultures and sexual communities" (Parker 2008: 9). I begin this chapter by describing the instrument, procedures, and participants involved in the quantitative aspect of this study. Following this, I describe the interview process and participants. I end this chapter with a brief discussion of the politics and troubles of conducting sexuality research in a culture that seeks to keep sexuality private and hidden (Epstein 2007).

QUANTITATIVELY MEASURING SELF-OBJECTIFICATION

Instrument

Although surveys are meant for describing a large population (Babbie 2004), they are also useful for measuring specific characteristics of a community. The data for this study were taken from a 54-closed-question survey that was created on Fluidsurveys, an on-line survey website. This survey has three main sections: (1) general sample demographics, including the participants' age, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, formal education level, and household income; (2) experiences with consensual sadomasochism, including the individual's

role preference (e.g., dominant versus submissive) and the types and frequencies of their play; and (3) self-concept measures, including body-mass index (BMI), body shape, and self-objectification, self-surveillance, body-shame, and body (dis)satisfaction measures. I expound upon each of these last four measures below.

Self-Objectification

Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) explain self-objectification and its positive relationship to self-surveillance, body-shame, and body-dissatisfaction. They claim that individuals (and mostly women) who self-objectify experience increased levels of self-surveillance, which can result in body-shame and ultimately body-dissatisfaction. I therefore utilize the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ) in this study; it "taps into how concerned respondents are with their own appearance without a judgmental or evaluative component" (Noll and Fredrickson 1998: 629). The 12-item scale asks participants to rank order each bodily characteristic according to how important each one is to their self-concept (1 indicates most important, 12 indicates least important). The bodily characteristics include 6 appearance based (physical attractiveness, coloring, weight, sex appeal, measurements, muscle tone) and 6 competence based (muscular strength, physical coordination, stamina, health, physical fitness, and physical energy level) body attributes. The self-objectification score was computed by summing the ranks of appearance and competence based attributes separately and then computing a difference score that ranged from -36 to 36 with higher scores indicating a greater emphasis on appearance and thus self-objectification. According to Noll, the SOQ demonstrates satisfactory construct validity (as cited in Noll and Fredrickson 1998).

Self-Surveillance

Individuals learn to survey themselves, or view themselves from a third perspective, in order to control their own bodies and behave in culturally appropriate ways. Goffman (1959) describes this as the "dramaturgical model" in which we present ourselves to others as we wish to be seen; we utilize impression management to ensure that our peers or "audience" accepts us. Taking this further, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) suggest that because Westerners sexually objectify women (and sometimes men), these women are likely to experience impression-management or self-surveillance to make sure they gain acceptance from those with social resources, or, status, control, and power (i.e., social and cultural capital). I have adopted the Self-Surveillance subscale from the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS). McKinley and Hyde (1996: 183) claim that the self-surveillance experienced (mostly) by women "ensure[s] that women comply with cultural body standards and avoid negative judgments." This subscale consists of 8 questions measured on a 6-point scale (ranging from definitely disagree = 5 to definitely agree = 1, with the option of "not applicable" = 0). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement pertains to them at the point in time; for example, "During the day, I think about how I look many times." Self-surveillance scores were computed by summing the questions and dividing the summed score by the number of statements (8) so that once the necessary statements were reverse coded, each score for body-surveillance ranged from zero to five, with higher scores indicating higher levels of self-surveillance. The self-surveillance subscale demonstrates strong construct validity (McKinley and Hyde 1996).

Body-Shame

In addition to experiencing self-surveillance as a consequence of self-objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) mention that if individuals do not conform to societal standards,

they experience body-shame. I adopted the Body-Shame subscale, like the Self-Surveillance subscale, from the Objectified Body Consciousness Scale (OBCS). McKinley and Hyde (1996) explain that society coaxes women (via the media and gender norms) into believing that they are responsible for how they look, and that if they cannot control their own appearance, then they must feel shame. In order to measure body-shame, the scale I borrowed from the OBCS asks participants to indicate the extent to which each statement pertains to them in regards to body-shame. An example of a body-shame statement is: "I feel ashamed of myself when I haven't made the effort to look my best." The body-shame subscale is made up of seven similar questions (eight in all) that are measured on a 6-point scale (ranging from definitely disagree = 5 to definitely agree = 1, with the option of "not applicable" = 0). This measure is computed and analyzed similarly to the self-surveillance measure.

Body (Dis)satisfaction.

The final measure of self-concept utilized in this study involves both the Body Areas Satisfaction (BASS) and Appearance Evaluation (AES) scales from the Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire (MBSRQ; Brown, Cash and Mikulka 1990; Cash 2000). Although Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) recognize that self-objectification results in increased levels of self-surveillance and body-shame, they do not explicitly state that these affect feelings of body (dis)satisfaction. They do, however, mention that body-shame "generates an intense desire to hide, to escape the painful gaze of others, or to disappear, alongside feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness" (181). I have included the BASS and AES, then, in order to test whether self-objectification affects body satisfaction and appearance evaluation. The Body Areas Satisfaction subscale from the MBSRQ "taps satisfaction with discrete aspects of one's appearance," while the Appearance Evaluation subscale measures feelings of physical

attractiveness or unattractiveness (Cash 2000: 3). The BASS asks participants to indicate how dissatisfied (very dissatisfied = 1) or satisfied (very satisfied = 5) they are with each of nine areas or aspects of their bodies (e.g., face, hair, lower torso, mid torso, upper torso, muscle tone, weight, height, and overall appearance). The AES, on the other hand, asks participants to indicate the extent to which each of seven statements pertains to them at the point in time (strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5); for example, "I like the way I look without my clothes on." Higher scores for both scales indicate greater body satisfaction than lower scores. The BASS and AES are "highly correlated (typically .7 to .8)…body-image evaluation indices" that have strong construct validities (Cash 2000).

In regards to the three survey sections, only the first two sections are utilized for Chapters 3 and 5 in which I examine the participants' genders, sexual orientations, races/ethnicities, classes, and CS role identities. Chapter 4, however, utilizes measures from all three sections of the survey because this is the chapter in which self-objectification is examined in relation to gender, sexual orientation, and CS role identities. In each data chapter, I utilize subsamples of the total sample rather than all of the survey data in order to avoid including the missing cases in each statistical analysis. Each chapter, therefore, has its own sample demographics that are provided in tables; although I also provide the overall sample demographics in this chapter.

<div align="center">Procedures</div>

The 259 participants for this study were recruited from two popular international social networking websites (Fetlife and The Wasteland) for sadomasochists and fetishists beginning 5 September 2009 and ending 6 September 2010. A discussion blog was created about the study on the first of these sites and individuals were given a web-link to the survey. In addition to this

recruitment method, business cards were created with a brief description of the study and the survey web-link; a stack of these cards were left on the flyer tables at two local CS clubs that serve the CS population of a medium-sized city and its surrounding towns in the Western United States. Of the sample, 42.5% (n = 110) reported living in the Western United States, 12.0% (n = 31) in the Midwest, 10.8% (n = 28) in the East, and 14.3% (n = 37) in the South. A final 17.8% (n = 46) reported living outside the United States[9] and 2.7% (n = 7) were "unspecified."

Because participants were mainly recruited from the Internet, I relied upon purposive sampling. This form of sampling is useful when "select[ing] members of a difficult-to-reach, specialized population" (Neuman 2007: 143). Unfortunately, this type of sampling procedure does not allow for generalizations about the total CS population. Those individuals that do not participate in on-line surveys or even on-line CS forums and networking websites probably did not participate in the survey and so those that did participate are not fully representative of the entire population. "Since it is very difficult to obtain a random sample of Internet users on sexuality-related sites, and since respondents to Internet questionnaires are usually subject to some sort of self-selection bias, there are [also] difficulties in interpretation of data" (Ross et al. 2003: 396). Alternatively, the participants in this study have similar characteristics (in terms of race, formal education, and age) to the participants of the extant research (Dancer et al. 2006; Kolmes et al. 2006; Moser and Levitt 1987; Sandnabba et al. 1999) and perhaps are not too different from those who did not participate in this particular study.

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[9] Those from outside the United States are from Canada (n = 22), United Kingdom (n = 10), Australia (n = 7), Belgium (n = 1), Finland (n = 1), Ireland (n = 1), The Netherlands (n = 1), New Zealand (n = 1), Sweden (n = 1), and "Mainland Europe" (n = 1).

Participants

A total of 259 self-identified consensual sadomasochists participated in this study. Half of these participants completed sections one and two of the survey with 50.2% (n=130) completing the entire survey. The completion rate for this survey, although low, was higher than expected. Ross et al. (2003: 396) state, "Anecdotal evidence has suggested that a large number of people who commence responding to sexuality-related Internet-based questionnaires drop out before completion of the questionnaires." Based on regression analyses, the three most significant variables determining whether a person completed Ross et al.'s survey was internet connection, sexual orientation, and gender. Their data suggest, "without correcting for dropout, homosexual and bisexual men are likely to be overrepresented in Internet questionnaire samples, as are better educated and more urban men and those living alone" (401). Also, longer surveys (above 30 items) may over-represent women in relationships. In this study, men and women participated about equally; 51.7% (n = 134) identified as women and 47.1% (n = 122) identified as men[10]; I found no relationship between gender and survey completion. In addition, queer[11] (n = 17) and bisexual (n = 12) men were not over-represented in this study; in fact, there were significantly fewer of these men than queer (n = 46) and bisexual (n = 38) women (x^2 = 45.955, p ≤ .001). In addition, most men (75.0 %) self-identified as heterosexual, while women self-

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[10] Five individuals self-identified as transgender male to female while three self-identified as transgender female to male. Rather than exclude these eight individuals from data analysis because of their small case size, I chose to include them by categorizing them within the gender category to which they transitioned. I did this with the intentions of including this group of individuals that have been traditionally misrepresented in research (Namaste 1996). As such, I also acknowledge that the lived experiences of transgendered people are as diverse as their identities and re-categorizing them into a binary system does not account for transgender positionalities. I make suggestions for further research of these individuals and communities at the end of this paper. Three others self-identified as a "crossdresser," "genderfluid," and "unspecified"; these individuals were coded as "missing."
[11] I use this term loosely to refer to individuals that self-identify as gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, hetero-flexible, and "open option."

identified as heterosexual (31.2%), bisexual (31.2%), and queer (37.7%) at approximately equal frequencies (see Table 2.1 in Appendix A).

As expected, and elaborated upon in Chapter 5, the vast majority of the participants in this dissertation self-identified as White/Caucasian. Eighty-eight percent (n = 228) self-identified as White/Caucasian, 10% (n = 26) as racial/ethnic minorities, and 2.0% (n=5) as "unspecified." Of the entire sample, 4.2% (n = 11) self-identified as Hispanic, Latina/o, or Chicana/o. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 64 with 26.6% (n = 69) between 18 and 24 years old, 22.4% (n = 58) between 25 and 34 years old, 23.2% (n = 60) between 35 and 44 years old, 18.2% (n = 47) between 45 and 54 years old, and 8.1% (n = 21) between 55 and 64 years old. Women were significantly younger than men in all age groups, except the 25 to 34-age range (x^2 = 27.696, p $\leq$ .001). Most participants reported having some form of formal education; 34.8% (n = 90) completed up to one year of college without a degree, while 53.7% (n = 139) achieved a professional degree ranging from an Associate to a Doctorate degree. Sixty-seven point one percent of the participants reported household incomes below $60,000. Those without a college degree were 1.60 times as likely as those with a college degree to report a household income below $20,000. Meanwhile, those with a college degree were 2.36 times as likely as those without a college degree to report a household income above $100,001 ($x^2$ = 20.283, p $\leq$ .05). Overall, this sample of self-identified CS participants is young, Caucasian, and formally educated.

As is elaborated upon in the concluding section of this dissertation, the results of each data chapter cannot be generalized to the overall CS community. Indeed, this dissertation only speaks to the experiences of those individuals who participated in this study. Again, these individuals were largely young, Caucasian, and formally educated. In terms of gender, the

sample for this study is particularly non-representative of non-heterosexual men, men below the age of 24, men without a college degree, and women above the age of 45. It is likely that the women in this study were younger than the men because older men often introduce their younger partners to CS (Ernulf and Innala 1995), and there are more heterosexual men in this study than non-heterosexual men because of sampling bias. For these reasons, I also chose to conduct semi-structured interviews for the qualitative aspect of this mixed-methods study.

QUALITATIVELY MEASURING SELF-OBJECTIFICATION

Interviewing Using Feminist Research Methods

One of the major limitation of survey research is that "it provides data only of what a person or organization says, and this may differ from what he or she actually does" (Neuman 2007: 167-8). I therefore utilized a concurrent triangulation strategy in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected at the same time and compared to determine if there were convergences, differences, or both in the results (Creswell 2008). Thus, there were some things that the interviews revealed that the survey did not capture, namely the interviewees' stories about their personal experiences with consensual sadomasochism and the complexities of CS roles and sadomasochistic play. For example, the survey participants categorized themselves by the gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, class, and CS role categories provided for them, whereas interviewees were asked to categorize themselves and explain these categorizations in detail. The interviewees' stories reveal the nuances inherent in identity categories and embodied experiences. The qualitative aspect of this study also specifically allows for the historicization of experience; the survey reveals how individuals experience their bodies at the time in which they answer the survey questions, while interviews reflect the participants' histories of embodiment.

For example, participants reflected upon their bodily experiences before, during, and after becoming aware of their kinks or CS preferences, which often spanned their lifetimes. In this way, I utilize the participants' personal stories to challenge many of the positivist "truths" of consensual sadomasochism revealed in the surveys.

With mixed-methods research, "Differences in power, prestige, and positions in social networks—and not simply the truth as defined by unambiguous and reliable measurement—are highlighted as determining the acceptance of a given fact" (Hunter and Brewer 2003: 590). Consequently, I not only challenge the "truths" shown by the survey (especially in Chapters 3 and 4), but also the "truths" told by participants (especially in Chapter 5), with care to not disqualify these truths, but instead to understand how participants came to understand them as such. Challenging "truths" and positivist research methods has a history in feminism.

> Feminist perspectives in social research question positivism's answers to the epistemological questions of who can possess knowledge, how knowledge is or can be obtained, and what knowledge is…Because there are a variety of knowledge-gathering techniques used by researchers, many feminists do not believe one method of knowledge gathering is inherently better or worse than any other (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, and Yaiser 2004: 11).

Instead, feminist researchers have worked to deconstruct subject-object splits by "accessing different voices" (12). I have attempted to do this very thing through semi-structured interviews in which I consider the situatedness of both myself as well as the interviewees.

Situating Myself in the Research

According to Hesse-Biber and Yaiser (2004: 106), "The questions asked, the variables and their conceptualization, the design of the research project, and the judgment criteria used by the researcher are all an expression of a specific viewpoint or belief held by the researcher." Having just taught a class focused on the social construction of sexuality in 2007, I had a relatively radical understanding of various "kinks," including consensual sadomasochism; based

on Rubin's (1984) "charmed circle," any sexual activity that is non-heterosexual and without procreation as an end is deemed bad, abnormal, unnatural, and damned in Western cultures. Thus, I began this study with a strong understanding of the ways in which consensual sadomasochists would potentially construct their behaviors outside of traditional notions of CS involving pathology and deviance; some would describe their desires as "normal" and "natural" while others would celebrate their "different" desires. I was completely taken-aback, however, when I realized that not all participants would explain their involvement in CS as a purposeful act of resistance to its pathologization. For instance, one participant pointed out that he was not like the other participants that played in public. This particular individual made a point to distance himself from the image of the dominant man that is authoritarian and forces himself upon the submissive woman; in other words, he had internalized the popular conceptualizations of consensual sadomasochism that were presented by feminists in the 1980s. He also explained that he wanted a "real" relationship with his submissive that involved love and companionship rather than "just sex." This interviewee made me realize the extent of difference between consensual sadomasochists and their interest in CS play; I also realized how much I had already internalized a queer perspective of CS that assumed the rejection of heteronormativity. Overall, this experience helped me reflect upon my own positionality as a sexualities researcher and educator.

Another challenge that I encountered as a result of my status as an educator was gaining entrée into the CS community. Although I had been to several local CS clubs and a large CS convention before beginning my research, I was not well known and also did not know many people within the community itself. As a researcher, therefore, I received quite a bit of skepticism from the larger community as to whether I could adequately conduct research on a

group of which I am not a part. Considering the amount of pathologization the community has experienced throughout its history, it is understandable that participants would be weary of an "outsider" coming in to their community and taking information that could potentially be misconstrued and/or misused to re-pathologize them and their practices. For instance, in a blog that I posted asking consensual sadomasochists about race/ethnicity, specifically, within the larger community, I received this response:

> I don't want the Dark Experience to be a footnote or to be relegated to a chapter. If there is someone who will write about our struggles, gains, concerns—quite frankly I would rather it be one of "us"—so that at least the reporter has some stake in the conversation.

As a Chicana woman, I struggled with responses like these, because I felt my legitimacy as a "woman of color" as well as a scholar was being questioned; I, on the one hand, wanted to give voice to marginalized individuals in the community (especially women, ethnic minorities, and ethnic minority women) because I share similar experiences of marginalization, and on the other hand realized that my position as a scholar outside of the CS community makes my experiences very different from those deeply immersed in the community. Responses such as these have made me fully aware of my "outside" status and consequentially who may or may not have participated in this study.

I have no doubt that my age, race/ethnicity, and gender also had an impact on who participated in this study. I began this study at 27 years old, which is an average age for women involved in CS; men tend to be at least five years older than women (Moser and Levitt 1987; Richters et al. 2008). Of the 25 participants that I interviewed for this study, eight identified as women, one as a gender queer transwoman, and the rest as men. Although I cannot be certain, it seemed to me that while more women took the survey than men, more men volunteered for an interview, which may have been a consequence of my status as a young woman scholar

interested in hearing stories about CS experiences. My role in this situation didn't become real clear until my fifth interview and the second time an interviewee had either asked me if I would be at community events to play in the future or had explicitly stated that I was the type of woman with which he would like to play. Not wanting to make these situations awkward for both of us—for them inviting and for me rejecting the invitation—I turned towards comedy to let them know that I appreciated the invitation but could not ethically be involved in CS play with my research participants.

In addition to play invitations, I was often asked at the end of interviews how I became involved in CS research. I shared with participants that I had been teaching a social construction of sexualities class with a lecturer who brought in a well-known consensual sadomasochist to explain the subculture of CS. From that presentation, I learned of an international CS convention nearby and attended it for the first time in 2007. I played as a dominant and submissive for the first time at this convention and therefore became interested in the ways individuals experienced CS and any possible relationships with their self-concepts. After sharing my "cultural competency" with the select interviewees who asked, I noticed a great deal of relaxation and comfort with my researcher status (Hesse-Biber and Yaiser 2004: 112). In retrospect, sharing my story before each interview and even in my survey recruitment may have been a better method for encouraging participants to discuss their bodily experiences with CS; at the time, I did not want to color their own experiences with mine. In addition, my perceived "outsider" status could be one reason that participants did not want to participate in this study, although I found that more often than not consensual sadomasochists wanted to "teach" me about their community in order to deconstruct the myths surrounding CS.

In addition to the complications with finding and interviewing a diverse sample for this study, I also struggled with questioning whether my interpretation of CS as an "outsider" would be accurate and more so whether my interpretations would further marginalize an already marginalized group. For example, in Chapter 3 I explain that the quantitative data reflects the normative gender role preferences occurring in CS relationships in which men take dominant roles and prefer submissive partners while women take submissive roles and prefer dominant partners in CS. However, I am careful to avoid essentializing gender roles by including a critique of this quantitative data with interview data that suggests gender, sexual orientation, and CS role preferences are more about the performance of a role rather than adherence to societal norms. In this way I carefully situate myself as an outsider, but one that *does* have a stake in the conversation. As a scholar and researcher, I have a responsibility to simultaneously create, historicize and deconstruct knowledge. And, as a queer feminist scholar of color, my particular responsibility is to create knowledge that is beneficial to the already marginalized consensual sadomasochists, whether a part of the larger CS community or not.

Procedures

At the end of the on-line survey, participants were given directions to contact me via an email address created specifically for this study if they were interested in a face-to-face or telephone interview. If they were interested in speaking further about their CS experiences, they could email me letting me know if they preferred that I contact them or that they contact me. Fifteen of 25 interviewees contacted me through this survey link, while seven contacted me on Fetlife and the last three were people I had already met through the social construction of sexualities course that I taught. Similar to the survey, then, the interviewees were selected via

purposive sampling. Because the CS community is for the most part still "underground," or a "hidden," this type of sampling was most appropriate for this study (Neuman 2007).

Once interviewees contacted me via email, we selected a date and time of a face-to-face or telephone interview. Additionally, face-to-face interviewees let me know the location that was most comfortable for them to interview. Twelve interviewees chose to interview face-to-face and most of these interviews occurred in a café of the participant's choice; three interviews occurred in the participants' homes and one took place in a park. The rest of the interviewees, mostly from other states (including California, Virginia, and Missouri) chose to have a telephone-interview. Generally, interviews lasted one hour, although one was as short as 25 minutes and one was as long as two hours. Interviews were semi-structured and in-depth, while also informal, to allow the participants some room to deviate from the questions asked of them.

I began each interview, whether face-to-face or telephone, with a review of the informed consent form approved by the University of Colorado's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I then asked the participants if they had any questions and if they were okay that I audio record our conversations; only one of the 25 participants did not want to be audio recorded. In order to protect the participants' anonymity, IRB required them to select a pseudonym for themselves and were asked to refrain from referencing other CS participants and clubs/events by their "real" names. This was particularly pertinent to this study considering that individuals within CS gain reputations and "good names" based on their play skills (Newmahr 2008; Rubin 1987), so that any individual that is skilled is well known locally and is often known nationally and sometimes internationally. If participants accidentally mentioned another participant and/or CS club/event, this information was erased from final transcription. In addition, all audio recordings, transcriptions, interview schedules with contact information, and interview notes were kept on a

TrueCrypt® secure encrypted hard-drive. Per IRB request, all audio recordings were erased from the recording device.

Once interviewees gave their consent to participate in the study, I began asking participants general questions (e.g., "Tell me about yourself, for example, what was your experience growing up") and moved to more specific questions (e.g., "Tell me about one of your favorite experiences with CS play"). In addition, I asked participants to describe their own bodies and how they generally feel about their bodies when they are playing and when they are not playing. They were also asked to retrospectively discuss their bodies before they were involved in CS. As was apparent in the survey, participants seemed to be comfortable discussing their CS play, but began to feel less comfortable when discussing their own bodies. Several participants weren't quite sure how they felt about their bodies (and I took this to mean that they were unsure about their appearances rather than how their bodies felt or functioned), while others were frustrated with their bodies because of a failure in health of sorts.

Once all interviews were collected, they were transcribed; I read through each one, often re-listening to the audio and making notes in the transcribed document about common themes. In a concurrent triangulated study, the data is either merged during the interpretation or discussion section or the results of the two datasets are compared side-by-side in a discussion. "This side-by-side integration is often seen in published mixed methods studies in which a discussion section first provides quantitative statistical results followed by qualitative quotes that support or disconfirm the quantitative results" (Creswell 2008: 214). Therefore I looked for themes to emerge in the quantitative data (e.g., CS role preference by gender and sexual orientation) while also checking the qualitative data for supporting or disconfirming themes.

Since interviews were semi-structured, it was relatively easy to construct common themes around role performance, social/cultural/erotic capital, and self-objectification.

Participants

As mentioned before, eight of the 25 interviewees identified as women, one as a gender queer transwoman, and 16 as men (see Table 2.2 in Appendix A). Interestingly, 12 of these men self-identified as heterosexual, one as "95% straight," one as bisexual, one as heteroflexible, and one as "kinky." This last interviewee explained, "I have a hard time saying I am straight because I am mostly straight but, like, I have fantasies about men and recently started doing some play with men; I like it" (Leance, personal communication). As explained in Chapter 3, participant's gender, sexual orientation, and CS role performances are often quite complex, as is evident in Leance's explanation of his sexual orientation. Even more than the men, the women explained their sexual orientations as less binary (heterosexual/homosexual) and more complicated. Of the nine women, four self-identified as queer, two as bisexual, two as pansexual, and one as "open-option." This interviewee stated, "I identify as open-option. I don't like the term 'bisexual' because it is not about sex to me…[it] is more of a soul connection kind of a thing, is how I like to look at it, as opposed to a physical one" (Nicki, personal communication). Interviewees, thus, offered detailed explanations for their choice in self-identification and the nuances of these choices.

Thirty-seven was the average age of all participants, with the youngest person at age 22 and the oldest at 62. On average, women were 33 years old and men were 40. All but three of these participants self-identified as White/Caucasian. These three self-identified as: a Chicana woman, an Asian woman, and a biracial Black/Caucasian man. The Asian woman was one of

two individuals from outside the US; the other individual was a man. In order to protect the

participants' identities, I do not reference the specific locations in which the participants

currently live, although they all reported living in Westernized cultures and countries—this is

significant for discussions of normative behaviors and expectations in this paper. Ten

interviewees specifically discussed their college educations, and while the other 15 did not, I

suspect that at least three more had formal educations because of their careers and complex

theoretical musings of CS identity politics during interviews. I further discuss some of these

identity politics and the complexities of gender, sexual orientation and CS role performance in

Chapter 3. First, however, I discuss the politics of conducting sexuality research in the US, at

this time in history.

RESEARCHING SEXUALITY IN 2010

> Despite a history of groundbreaking empirical research and critical theory, the
> study of sexuality has always been marginal within sociology itself, while the
> sociological legacy has been overlooked in the broader interdisciplinary project of
> sexuality studies (Irvine 2003: 430).

In this passage, Irvine (2003) explains that sociology has a long history of ignoring

sexuality, yet those sociologists (namely Laud Humphreys and Albert Reiss) who have studied

sexuality have often been ignored in sexuality studies.   These studies, however, are important to

remember, Irvine suggests, because they helped to historicize sexuality and problematize sexual

"deviance." Specifically, Humphreys' book, *Tearoom Trade*, and Reiss' article, "The Social

Integration of Queers and Peers," made significant contributions to the sociology of sexuality by

positing that sexuality is a social interaction rather than an identity. Despite the author's major

contributions to sexuality studies, however, Irvine notes that *Tearoom Trade* "nearly resulted in

the revocation of Humphreys' doctorate by the Chancellor of Washington University" and

"[m]ethodological constraints will forever disallow research that so intimately explores the intersectionalities of sexual lives and social worlds" (442). In other words, these studies were too radical even for those departments and institutions seeking to increase knowledge about the social world. Indeed, sexuality studies are a:

> stigmatized subject casting suspicion upon those who study it. The history of sexuality research throughout the twentieth century has been one of stigma. The topic is controversial, even disreputable to many, and researchers have been repeatedly warned against studying sexuality…Sex is stigmatized, as is those who research it (451).

This is something I came to learn intimately during my human research committee (HRC)—the university's version of an institutional review board (IRB)—application process.

In November 2008, I submit a research proposal to the university's HRC for review. The initial research proposal included an anonymous on-line survey through Surveymonkey® and confidential face-to-face and telephone interviews with self-identified consensual sadomasochists. The HRC reviewed this initial proposal as an "exempt" status study and approved the survey as well as the interviews in the same month that I submit the proposal. At the same time that I submit the proposal, however, I contacted the Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS); this is an organization administered by a group of science and humanities scholars as well as alternative sexuality community representatives. CARAS reviews sexuality study protocols and offers advice and recruitment support to sexuality research that they deem beneficial to the community being studied. Once CARAS reviewed my study protocol, the CARAS research advisory committee (RAC) provisionally accepted the study under the condition that I: (1) add questions to my survey, including questions about participants' demographic information so that I might find common characteristics between participants, (2) audio record interviewees and keep the

recordings indefinitely so that I might analyze the interviews in-depth even after the dissertation defense, and (3) ask interviewees for contact information so that I might contact them in the future for additional research. The new information that I sought from participants took my study from "exempt" to "full review" status since I could only promise confidentiality to participants rather than anonymity. I submit this revised protocol to the university's HRC in January 2009.

By April 2009 I heard back from the HRC. They requested further justification for the changes made to my protocol, in addition to their requests that I: (1) set a limit to the amount of time that I would keep my data, (2) move my survey to a "more secure" survey hosting website, (3) keep my data on a secure encrypted, external hard drive, (4) keep this hard drive as well as all consent forms and printed data in a rented safety deposit box, (5) remove questions from the survey that asked participants how they view their partners' bodies, and (6) hold face-to-face interviews in a rented office on public grounds (e.g., a library or university building). All of these requests for additional security came despite the fact that I would be collecting only the pseudonyms of adult interviewees who volunteered for and freely consented to an interview and the on-line survey was completely anonymous. Interestingly, my peers collecting data that I believed to be far more sensitive (e.g., intimate partner abuse, under-age drug and alcohol use, and teenage sexual experience) than consensual sexual activities reported by consenting adults had their protocols reviewed and approved in a matter of months. Meanwhile, the HRC asked for more revisions in June 2009 and finally approved the revised protocol at the end of August 2009. Nearly nine months after seeking HRC approval, I was given permission to begin collecting data.

More than being frustrating, my HRC experience highlighted the taboo nature of sexuality research and specifically alternative/non-normative sexuality research. Although I cannot be certain, it seemed as though the HRC found my study participants more vulnerable than the abused women, under-age drinkers, and sexually active teenagers that my peers were studying. And despite this concern for the study participants, the HRC insisted that I keep the standard language required for the Certificate of Confidentiality even with my contention that this language was not appropriate for my participants; the standard language mentions that the researcher will report any illegal behaviors to the authorities, which is problematic because in certain jurisdictions in the US, CS has been criminalized through obscure laws that are intended to protect individuals from self-harm and non-consensual violence, and more so to ensure heteronormativity (Pa 2002; Ridinger 2006; Wright 2006). It became even more clear that the HRC's concerns with my study had more to do with the topic than the research methods when I met with them in April 2009 to discuss their requested revisions. Here, they insisted that I meet with interviewees in a semi-public setting for the participants' own "safety." So, rather than meeting participants where they felt most comfortable, the HRC expected participants to travel to public libraries or local college campuses to interview in private rooms. When I mentioned that participants were more likely to be "outed" in this sort of meeting, a few board members suggested that semi-public settings are better suited for interviews about explicit sexual behaviors. In this case, it seemed that the board members were making decisions about participant comfort levels based on their own comfort with the topic; this is something that Weiderman (2002) explains occurs often in sexuality research.

Despite HRC concerns for the potential study participants, no survey participants and no interviewees voiced their distress over having participated in this study. On the contrary, I had

several participants thank me for conducting the study; they felt that talking about their CS

experiences made them understand their roles and preferences more than they had previously.

> At the least, completing an anonymous questionnaire regarding sexual attitudes and behaviors affords the respondent the opportunity to learn how researchers attempt to measure sexuality constructs and may allow the respondent the opportunity to clarify his or her own attitudes (Weiderman 2002: 496).

Indeed, one participant, Eternal Student, sent me a letter explaining the importance of this study for his life:

> I just wanted to let you know, that you unknowingly helped me a great deal. Oddly enough, just seeing BDSM acknowledged in a non-judgmental, scientific and research-based forum with your interview and survey, and then talking with you afterwards, gave me the courage I needed to finally jump into the public scene. I've learned a great deal from it, have been attending classes and parties, and meeting some really awesome people, and in many ways, doing so has changed my understanding and participation in BDSM.

> I know anthropologists aren't supposed to influence their objects of study, but you did, and it was for the better. Thanks for studying BDSM objectively, and therefore, for lending it the legitimacy I needed to publicly accept what I am and what I enjoy.

Still others provided feedback about the survey and advised me on ways to improve questions as

well as improve response rates. In this sense, the research process became a collaborative

project between myself and the CS community—including those who do not identify as part of

the larger community, yet still take part in on-line CS networking.

METHODOLOGICAL CONCERNS

As mentioned above, several survey participants and interviewees offered advise on how

to improve this study throughout its course. From the very beginning of this study when I

proposed the research to HRC, I encountered problems with the methodology. After creating the

survey at Surveymonkey®, HRC asked that I move the survey to another hosting site,

Fluidsurveys®, because it is more secure. This move took considerable effort since both

websites utilize different survey tools and formats. Even when the move was completed, I had difficulties with the host site: they double charged me for their services several times and also kept participants from accessing the survey multiple times while they were maintaining their website. Ultimately, this led to several potential participants emailing or messaging me on Fetlife to let me know that they would not be participating in the survey because it either kept erasing their data or would not let them participate in the survey. This was particularly frustrating knowing that I had lost participants, but more so that these potential participants were voicing their frustrations with the study on a public blog for other potential participants to view. In addition, HRC requested that I not make any survey questions mandatory; therefore, participants were not warned if they missed questions on the survey. Overall, this caused even more frustration for participants who were already spending at least one hour filling out the detailed instrument.

The interviews also posed a number of challenges. First and foremost, the local CS community is a tight-knit group that has a fairly young history (in comparison to larger, coastal cities). Therefore, people that know one another within this community have either been in the community since its inception (about 15-20 years ago, according to Grey, an interviewee) or have at least been networking at local munches—social gatherings for CS networking—and building rapport. Gaining rapport, then, has been essential to this study. Several interviewees mentioned that individuals in the community usually know one another relatively well, since there are only two local, public CS clubs in the area, and that it was essential that I gain entrée through another well-known community member. Unfortunately, this was trickier than I had anticipated, since the two local clubs had a history of rivalry. Two interviewees shared stories about one of the clubs being known for bad/dangerous participants while the other was known

for having poor rules of engagement; my choice for entrée, therefore, would be important to the local community members. I decided to attend both clubs at regular intervals in the beginning of this study, which became an expensive endeavor; without a membership at the clubs, I was paying $15 each time I wanted to attend. I met people at both clubs, but did not attend regularly enough to become well known. This, in addition to the survey concerns, had an effect on the number of participants that I could recruit for this study. I address these concerns more thoroughly in the final chapter and make recommendations for an improved sexuality research methodology.

CHAPTER 3

PLAYING WITH PATRIARCHY: GENDER, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND

CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISTIC ROLE PERFORMANCE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I explain consensual sadomasochism (CS) as consensual sexual role-playing "involving the infliction of pain or intense sensation, use of restraint, or power exchange" (Lawrence and Love-Crowell 2008: 67) and the "ritualization of dominance and submission" (Weinberg 2006: 33). It is also within this chapter that I explore performativity, as explained by Butler (2004) and Muñoz (1999), and the ways in which survey and interview participants explain their performance of dominant and submissive roles as related to their gender and sexual orientations. Specifically, the performance of both dominant and submissive roles by "queer" identifying individuals suggests that these consensual sadomasochists challenge heteronormative standards of sex and gender roles, both consciously and subconsiously. Since scarcely any research has specifically addressed role performance for consensual sadomasochists, I use this opportunity to try and better understand what is occurring with the quantitative data as well as how interview participants explain their CS role performances. First, however, I discuss the extant CS research and how this particular chapter contributes to this research.

Research on the prevalence of consensual sadomasochism in the United States has focused on sexual arousal and fantasies, as well as how these two differ between men and women (Donnelly and Fraser 1998; Person et al. 1989; Yost 2007). For instance, Donnelly and Fraser's (1998) study of undergraduate students, found men were more aroused by fantasizing

about both sadism and masochism than women. To better understand gender within the CS community, however, Yost examined consensual sadomasochists' fantasies and specifically looked for themes of dominance and submission in gendered sexual scripts. She found that men fantasized about dominance more than women and women fantasized about submission marginally more than men.

Notably, the extant research on arousal and fantasies of consensual sadomasochism has provided significant insight into consensual sadomasochists' fantasies and gender roles but it has not addressed what Donnelly and Fraser note is problematic for their study published in 1998: fantasizing about CS and actually participating in CS can have very different consequences for the roles consensual sadomasochists might take. In addition, not one of these earlier studies examined the difference that consensual sadomasochists' sexual orientations might play into the CS roles (dominant, submissive, or switch) they take, the frequencies with which they play these roles, and the fluidity of these roles (i.e., expectations about changing roles, as well as acknowledgement that these roles change with time, location, CS scene, and partner).

Yost (2007: 148) additionally wondered whether sexual orientation might influence gender roles, suggesting, "traditional gender roles in fantasy might be diminished" among "S/M switches that identify as homosexual or bisexual." Since CS research indicates that non-heterosexual consensual sadomasochists differ significantly from heterosexual consensual sadomasochists in terms of the roles they play, the frequency of play, and the fluidity of their roles (Hale 1997; Mosher, Levitt, and Manley 2006; Nordling et al. 2006; Sandnabba, Santilla, and Nordling 1999), it is reasonable to hypothesize that among consensual sadomasochists, traditional gender roles are less predominant among non-heterosexual than heterosexual participants.

To test this hypothesis, I examine the differences between a subset of 188 heterosexual (n = 96) and non-heterosexual (n = 92) men and women from the original sample of 259 self-identified consensual sadomasochists who vary by gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, education, and age (see Table 3.1 in Appendix A). This subset was chosen because they responded to all survey questions required for this particular chapter, namely questions about their gender, sexual orientation, CS role identity, CS role preference, and CS role fluidity. I focus particularly on the frequency with which they play dominant, submissive, and switch roles, as well as the differences between their play in these roles and their self-identification as dominant, submissive, or switch. Finally, I examine the participants' role fluidity, which involves their expectations that their roles will change, as well as their reports of these roles actually changing with time, play location, CS scene, and play partner(s). Overall, I test these measures with t-tests, multinomial logistic regression models, and analysis of variance models and utilize the results to discuss CS role performativity in relation to gender and sexual orientation. I further explain the potential that CS play has for creating a social space in which consensual sadomasochists can consciously challenge traditional gender roles by performing non-heteronormative dominance and submission. As such, I position this chapter as a direct response to radical feminists from the 1980s and 1990s that charged CS with reinforcing patriarchy and violence.

The radical feminists in opposition to CS, according to Hopkins (1994), claimed that women as an oppressed group with internalized sexism were unable to freely consent to sex that subordinated them to men, caused them pain, and (further) disempowered them (Linden et al. 1982; MacKinnon 1997; Mansfield 1997; Saxe 1992). These criticisms assumed a patriarchy where masculine men dominate feminine women, where it is impossible for the latter, because of

patriarchy, to actually consent to submission and dominance from men. However, as CS theorists have made clear, CS is about the simulation rather than the replication of dominance and submission, and therefore does *not* reinforce patriarchy (Hopkins 1994; Hornsby 1999). Other CS theorists have even gone as far as to claim that CS is a "self-consciously transmogrified parody" of violence (Pa 2002: 78), a "parody of the hidden sexual nature of fascism" (Califia 1994: 170), and "theater—an amusement park" (Stoller 1991: 17).

Considering my own framing of CS as performance, then, I specifically discuss the results using Butler's (2004) theory of performativity whereby claiming ownership to an identity (e.g., dominant, submissive, or switch) requires ritualistically performing that identity (e.g., the masculine man performing the dominant role. Since, these boundaries of performance are not always as rigid for consensual sadomasochists during play (e.g., the feminine woman performs masculinity when she dominates as a Daddy) as they may be outside of CS play (e.g., the feminine woman must perform femininity in order to be accepted in society, especially as a heterosexual individual), I also utilize Muñoz's (1999) theory of performativity to discuss how queer performances work to deconstruct heteronormative gender and sex expectations. First, however, I review the literature relevant to this chapter.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, I review the literature that is most relevant to this particular chapter. This literature focuses on CS role identities and preferences, as well as CS role fluidity. Although no scholars actually used the term, "role fluidity," several discussed the ways in which consensual sadomasochists will switch from dominant to submissive roles and vice-versa. I explain role

fluidity more in-depth in this section but use the concept in the same sense of the researchers who discussed role switching.

CS Role Identity and Preference

Some CS researchers have found that role preference is related to gender and sexual orientation. Many of these researchers, however, have exclusively (Chaline 2010; Sandnabba et al. 1999; Spengler 1977) or disproportionately (Alison et al. 2001; Cross and Matheson 2006; Moser and Levitt 1987; Nordling et al. 2000; Nordling et al. 2006; Sandnabba et al. 2002; Santtila et al. 2002) researched self-identified sadomasochistic men. According to Spengler (1977: 443), his sample was entirely men because there were "very few women in the clubs" and "hardly any nonprostitute ads" in the magazines/newspapers from which he recruited participants. More recent studies with proportionate gender samples have focused on one practice within CS, such as slavery (Dancer et al. 2006), and have altogether avoided analyses of role preference (Taylor and Ussher 2001). Still, others that have examined role preference have been limited in their analyses of how these roles differ depending upon sexual orientation (Yost 2007). Of these studies, Nordling et al. (2006) were the only ones to examine the relationship between gender, sexual orientation, and CS role identities together. They found that heterosexual men and especially heterosexual women were more likely than homosexual men to identify as masochistic, while homosexual men were more likely than heterosexual men and women to identify as sadistic; unfortunately, their sample of lesbian women was too small to generalize and they did not identify roles beyond the sadist and masochist.

Utilizing a sample of 97 women (30.9% bisexual, 26.8% heterosexual, 23.7 % queer, 7.2% pansexual, 7.2% "other"[12] and 4.1% lesbian) and 91 men (76.9% heterosexual, 9.9% bisexual, 4.4% pansexual, 4.4% queer, and 4.4% gay), this chapter fills the gap in literature by providing an empirical analysis of the interacting effects of gender, sexual orientation, and CS role performance; rather than simply examine the interacting effects of gender, sexual orientation, and CS identity, however, I also analyze the frequency with which the participants play dominant, submissive, and switch roles and the fluidity of these roles in order to better understand CS role performativity.

CS Role Fluidity

Theorists as early as Baumeister (1988) have claimed that CS roles change over time. Baumeister specifically suggested that masochism is about the need for participants to escape from the self-awareness of everyday life. As such, he concluded that masochism is a healthy coping mechanism for the stresses of life, and like any other temporary solution (i.e., drugs, exercise, intoxication, and physical sports), it usually results in transformation; in this case, masochism leads to sadism and eventually a loss of interest in CS altogether. Many theorists and CS researchers, however, have critiqued Baumeister for being too simplistic in his analysis of masochism, in particular, and CS roles in general. For instance, Kleinplatz (2006) explained that CS play could be used for self-discovery rather than escape-from-self. Indeed, Mosher et al. (2006: 120) stated, "Rather than an escape from the self [as suggested by Baumeister 1988], leathermen engaged in masochistic sexual acts to learn about their selves, to experiment with gender, and to develop a sense of authenticity." Mosher et al. therefore directly linked CS play

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[12] "Others" consist of participants who self-identified as "heteroflexible", "open option", and "bisexual and queer".

(for leathermen) to the performance of gender and sexual orientation. Interestingly, Baumeister suggested that because masochism is about escape from an identity, it could not be a performance; actors require self-awareness in order to perform.

Hart (1998: 61) critiqued Baumeister for being too simplistic in his discussion of performativity, but more specifically identified his theory as problematic for feminists because it was an "appropriation of the services of sex workers" whereby consent is often non-existent or coerced. In other words, Hart believed feminists have a specific concern with women performing submissive roles because they fail to fully understand CS performativity as a staging of desire and only see it as a replication of patriarchy. Given these critiques of Baumeister, it seems particularly important to understand CS role fluidity, especially given the lack of data on this phenomenon. To date, the only CS researchers to empirically examine Baumeister's "escape from self" theory found that masochists were not more likely to engage in "escapist behaviors" (Cross and Matheson 2006), and that either gay and lesbian consensual sadomasochists *did not* change their role preferences over time (Nordling et al. 2006) or they *did* change their roles over time because they engaged in sadomasochism as performance (Chaline 2010; Mosher et al. 2006).

Considering the general lack of research (or even data) on the interacting effects of gender, sexual orientation and CS role performance, this chapter attempts to fill this gap. In addition, this study significantly adds to the existing CS research by incorporating a sociological and feminist discussion of the data, expressly exploring the ways in which CS role performances provide a social space for consensual sadomasochists to (consciously and subconsciously) challenge the heteronormativity of gender roles. In order to explore CS role performance, I

examine the ways in which heterosexual, bisexual, and "other" men and women differ in their responses to three measures of CS performativity:

1. *CS Role Identity*: Participants were asked to self-identify as a submissive, slave, bottom, masochist, dominant, Master/Mistress, top, sadist, or switch. For instance, participants saw the following on the survey and were allowed the space to select and explain their CS role identity: "I primarily identify myself as the following (Choose ONE and explain): Submissive, Slave, Bottom, Masochist, Dominant, Master/Mistress, Top, Sadist, Switch/Versatile, or Other."

2. *CS Role Preference*: Participants were asked the frequency (on a 5-point Likert scale) of their play in dominant, submissive, and switch roles. I measured the frequency with which they performed top/dominant and bottom/submissive roles using a Likert scale (1 = Always in the top/dominant role, 5 = Always in the bottom/submissive role). Many times when participants selected their CS role identities, they explained why they played that particular role and with whom; they also explained whether there were instances in which this role was played differently according to partner, location, and/or CS scene.

3. *CS Role Fluidity*: Participants were asked whether their roles had changed since their first experience in CS and whether their roles have changed according to time, location, CS scene, and play partner(s). Based on these five questions, I created a "role fluidity" scale (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.8998). Participant's responses were then re-coded to dichotomous (1 = Yes, 0 = No) variables (Kruder-Richardson Reliability Coefficient = 0.9176); the sum of the five role fluidity questions resulted in an overall "role fluidity" score for each participant, with a higher score indicating greater role

fluidity. The mean CS Role Fluidity score on a scale of one to five was 2.80 (*SD = 1.095*) for the entire sample.

RESULTS

In this section I provide the results of the crosstabulations, regression analyses, and analysis of variance involving gender, sexual orientation and CS role performance. I first present the main effects of CS Role Identity and Preference by gender and sexual orientation (see Table 3.2 in Appendix A), considering Butler's (1993) claim that sexual relations (i.e., sexual orientation) and gender are inseparable and that they are part of one's performance. Because the sample size, particularly for non-heterosexual men was too small, the interacting effects of CS Role Identity and Preference by gender and sexual orientation are not provided. The main effects, however, demonstrate the nuances of CS role performance and provide an effective starting point for discussing CS role performance.

Role Identity

The women in this sample were 3.05 times as likely as the men to self-identify as a submissive, slave, bottom, or masochist (SSBM) while the men were 4.55 times as likely as the women to self-identify as a dominant, Master, top, or sadist (DMTS). Considering that men were 2.69 times as likely as women to self identify as heterosexual ($x^2 = 47.199$, $p \le .001$) it comes as no surprise that heterosexual individuals were more likely than all others to self-identify as DMTS. Heterosexuals were also more likely than all others to self-identify as SSBM, although to a lesser extent. Most interestingly, however, is the Switch category; while women and men seem to self-identify as Switch/Versatile equally, those identifying with "other" sexual

orientations were more likely than all others to self-identify as Switch/Versatile. This finding suggests that Switch/Versatile Identity may be more closely related to sexual orientation than gender, whereas SSBM and DMTS identities are more closely related to gender, but also sexual orientation. The multinomial logistic regressions of CS Identity by gender and sexual orientation reveal similar results (see Table 3.3 in Appendix A).

The three models calculated in the multinomial logistic regression were calculated based on the following categorizations, including the constants for education and age: (1) gender only, (2) gender and sexual orientation, and (3) gender, sexual orientation, and role fluidity. These data reveal that gender remains important for predicting the odds of self-identifying as DMTS and Switch, in comparison to SSBM, throughout the three models. In the first model, women were 92% less likely than men to self-identify as DMTS versus SSBM, and by the second and third models, women were 89% less likely than men to self-identify as DMTS versus SSBM, meaning that the relative risk ratios for gender stay fairly stable for these categories. The most interesting differences in relative risk ratios, however, occur for sexual orientation in Models 2 and 3. Bisexual individuals, in relation to heterosexual individuals, move from being 75% less likely to self-identify as DMTS versus SSBM in Model 2 to 68% less likely in Model 3. And, those with "other" sexual orientations, in relation to heterosexuals, are 298% more likely to self-identify as Switch versus SSBM. By Model 3, significance for bisexuals' DMTS versus SSBM self-identities is lost, while significance is maintained for "others'" Switch versus SSBM self-identities; this implies that role fluidity explains some of this difference in models for bisexuals, but not for "others." Also, those with a high role fluidity score are 200% more likely than those with lower scores to self-identify as a Switch versus SSBM. This data is also supported by and elaborated upon in the analysis of variance discussed in the "Role Fluidity" section of this paper.

Role Preference

Taking into consideration that identity is often related to the performance of said identity (e.g., men act masculine and women must act feminine in order to "fit in" to a patriarchal society), I expected to find that the significance for CS identities would transfer to CS roles. For example, men would always perform top/dominant roles and women would always perform bottom/submissive roles, especially since men were more likely than women to self-identify as DMTS and women were more likely than men to self-identify as SSBM. The data revealed that the men in this study were 5.14 times as likely as the women to always perform dominant roles and the women were 2.73 times as likely as the men to always perform submissive roles. Again, heterosexuals were more likely than all others to always perform dominant roles and to a lesser extent, submissive roles. Also, women and men did not differ much with regards to Switch preferences. Interestingly, several of those that self-identified as SSBM and DMTS (especially for bisexual and "other" individuals) seem to have Switch preferences.

The multinomial logistic regression models for CS Role Preference do not suggest many differences from the CS Role Identity models (see Table 3.4 in Appendix A). For instance, women, relative to men, are still less likely to perform dominant and switch roles in comparison to submissive roles. Model 3 shows that women are 92% less likely to perform dominant than submissive roles and 79% less likely to perform switch than submissive roles. Also, in Model 2, those with "other" sexual orientations are 292% more likely to perform switch versus submissive roles, when compared to heterosexuals. The few differences that do exist between role preferences and role identities, however, are both interesting and important. Significantly, bisexual individuals no longer have a significant negative relationship for selecting dominant

over submissive roles, as they did for role identity in Model 2. In addition, those with "other" sexual orientations no longer have significant preferences for switch versus submissive roles once role fluidity is considered in Model 3. Another change between tables involves the constant for ages 18-24: it is significant and positive for switch role preferences, whereas they were not significant for CS switch identities. In other words, those ages 18-24 are 435% and 468% more likely than the oldest group (55-64) to perform switch versus submissive roles. Finally, those with higher role fluidities were 52% less likely than those with lower role fluidity scores to have dominant versus submissive role preferences. Overall, this data reveals the importance of role fluidity for understanding CS role identities and preferences.

Role Fluidity

The tests for differences in role fluidity means by gender, sexual orientation, CS Role Identity, and CS Role Preference indicate that the differences in role fluidity means are significant for gender, as well as the other three variables (see Table 3.5 in Appendix A). The role fluidity scores for women, those with "other" sexual orientations, and those who self-identified as Switches and reported preferring these roles were significantly higher than for their comparison groups.

Participants' Experiences With Role Fluidity

In addition to the data described above, interviewees were asked about their CS role identities, preferences, and even fluidity. Their stories revealed the ways in which bisexual and queer individuals, specifically, experienced difference and contradiction within their own CS identities and roles. And, since this sample largely consisted of bisexual and queer women, it

revealed the ways in which *these* particular individuals' performances work against a patriarchal system that requires them to perform (sometimes unconsciously) submissive roles in their public as well as private lives. More over, these were the women who viewed dominant and submissive roles as fluid. For instance, Mz. Mira, a transgender woman explained, "I am a switch. I top, but I am not a highly skilled top…" When asked if she preferred one role over another, she responded with: "People change over time, so I don't think right now it is a binding characteristic to me. I don't think it is an essence; it is just there, you know. It can change, it is fluid." Here, Mz. Mira, explicitly stated the fluidity of her CS role, while other interviewees alluded to this fluidity when they described switching roles according to their partner, the play scene, and their moods. Mz. Mira mentioned that she had more luck finding play partners among lesbians, because they are "used to a high degree of gender variance," while Apricating, a switch woman, explained the intricacies of her switching. She stated that she switches for her heterosexual male partner, bottoms for her pansexual trans male partner, and is involved in fetish play with her queer lesbian partners. These consensual sadomasochists' reflections of role fluidity, thus, reveal the very complexities of queer and switch performances.

Interestingly, those women[13] who self-identified as queer also strongly voiced their preferences for queer feminist politics. Apricating explained, "I think my background in queer and feminist theory (and polyamorous theory too) enables me to practice BDSM while being more conscious of what I'm doing, what power I want to relinquish and what power I want to retain, and how to negotiate that." In addition, she mentioned that when she plays with heterosexual men who are not versed in feminist and queer theories, she is much more strict about what limits she sets for the play scene. She affirmed, "Being a feminist affects the level of

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[13] No men in this study self-identified as queer, although one self-identified as "kinky" and explained his preference for this term stemming from the sexual nature of his CS play.

consent I require, from myself and others, the circumstances I consider acceptable for that consent to be given, and also my style of submission." Having a feminist and queer background thus helped Apricating become more conscious of her CS role preferences.

For other participants, being versed in feminist and queer theory also meant being more willing to critique CS play. For example, HelenBedd intricately detailed the contradictions she felt bottoming as a feminist. She questioned, "Have I eroticized my own oppression?" Because she was so conflicted about whether the real power differences between men and women were being reinforced in CS play, she said she reserved her play for private spaces in which she knew all of the participants so that she could have a better idea of the message the other participants were taking away from the scene. In other words, HelenBedd realized that at a certain level, she was not in control of other observer's conceptions of her power-play in public, whereas her personal friends who had similar politics would understand that as a woman performing the bottom role, she was simulating rather than replicating patriarchy. And, by performing these roles with men and women alike, with the intention of sexual pleasure rather than reproduction, she was also subverting heteronormativity.

DISCUSSION

In several critiques of consensual sadomasochism, especially among women, the claim is that rather than subverting patriarchal systems, consensual sadomasochists reinforce these systems. For example, Calhoun (2003: 347) notes:

> Raymond sharply criticizes lesbian lifestylers and sexual libertarians for failure to see that in advocating an anything goes sexuality (including lesbian pornography and s/m) as the path to liberation, they are simply repeating the patriarchal image of woman as essentially sexual being. Moreover, as I mentioned earlier, insofar as lesbian lifestylers advocate aggressive and violent forms of sexuality, they are simply putting a "male-constructed sexuality in drag."

The major problem Calhoun finds with Raymond's critique is that lesbian sex radicals do indeed resist patriarchy, albeit in a different way than feminists such as Raymond see fit. These sex radicals "insist on the reality and value of…sexuality" and also resist "heterosexual society's reservation of the private sphere for male-female couples only" (347). In addition, I would argue that sex radicals, such as many of the queer/"other" consensual sadomasochists in this study, resist role rigidity when they change their CS roles and when they explain these changes as performances. As a performance, participants learn to make informed decisions about their role fluidity and namely what role they will play, when they will play this role, and with whom they will play this role. The quantitative data firmly reflects this argument.

According to the quantitative data, men and heterosexuals in this sample were significantly more likely than the women and non-heterosexuals to self-identify as DMTS. The men and heterosexuals in this sample were also significantly more likely than women and non-heterosexuals to always perform dominant roles. Alternatively, the women and heterosexuals in this sample were significantly more likely than the men and those with bisexual or "other" sexual orientations to self-identify as SSBM and to always perform submissive roles. Meanwhile, those with "other" sexual orientations were significantly more likely than heterosexuals and bisexuals to self-identify as Switch/Versatile and to perform switch roles, as was also suggested by the interviewees.

These data suggest that the differences between CS Role Identity and CS Role Preference (especially for those who switch roles) have more to do with sexual orientation than with gender. Indeed, the multinomial logistic regression models for CS Role Identity and CS Role Preference reaffirm this finding in Model 2 of Tables 3.3 and 3.4: here, those with "other" sexual orientations are 333% and 311% more likely to self-identify as Switch/Versatile and perform

switch roles than heterosexual individuals, respectively. Finally, the analyses of variance reveal that mean role-fluidity scores for women, those with "other" sexual orientations, Switch/Versatile identities, and switch role preferences are significantly higher than for all comparison groups. Overall, these results highlight the importance of examining sexual orientation in addition to gender in CS research and it also raises important questions about Switch identities and roles. In particular, why are those with "other" sexual orientations more likely than bisexuals and heterosexuals to self-identify as Switch and perform switch roles? Also, if the sample used in this study included more bisexual and "other" men, would the results be significantly different?

While I can only speculate the answer to the second question based on role fluidity means, which appear to be relatively equal (non-heterosexual men = 2.48 and non-heterosexual women = 2.33), this speculation seems to match the data found by Chaline (2010). Although Chaline only examined Gay CS role performances, he found that these individuals "had not limited themselves to a single sexual practice or identity during their [CS] careers" (346). Hence, Chaline explained their fluidity as a "performative sexual identity practice" that for this study seems to be experienced mostly by those with "other" sexual orientations. Alternatively, heterosexual individuals are less likely than bisexuals and "others" to switch roles throughout their CS involvement, making Baumeister's (1988) "escape-from-self" theory incomplete, at best. Returning to the first question, then, what is happening for those with "other" sexual orientations that allow them to have higher role fluidity scores than bisexual individuals and especially heterosexual individuals? This question can best be answered utilizing Muñoz's (1999) analysis of performance in which queer folks utilize multiple queer performances to make queerity visible in a heteroscopic economy.

Developing this paper based on gender performances and their relationships to CS Role Identity, CS Role Performance, and CS Role Fluidity without ever considering sexual orientation, as would have been protocol given Butler's (2004) privileging of gender performances over sexual orientation, would suggest that consensual sadomasochism is a highly heteronormative practice that reinforces sex/gender dimorphisms and heterosexualized desire (Calhoun 2003), in which men perform dominant roles and women perform submissive roles to these men. This analysis, however, misses some very important details about CS play, namely that dominants do not always play with submissives, men and women may perform both roles, and as the data suggest, many individuals switch roles, which seems to be related to sexual orientation. Thus, this study challenges the CS literature that has largely determined CS roles, in fantasy and actuality, are rigid where men fantasize about dominance and women fantasize about submission (Donnelly and Fraser 1998; Yost 2007). Moreover, this study addresses part of the problem that scholars argue is inherent within Butler's (2004) discussion of performativity, namely that it overlooks queer performativity in its effort to address gender performativity.

The findings in this chapter suggest that in addition to being less rigid than originally determined, CS roles also exist as queer performances, especially for those who have Switch/Versatile identities and preferences. CS is less rigid in that the individual has an identity and performs this identity through simulations of dominance and submission. The major difference between gender performance and CS role performance, however, is that one may switch roles in CS play, but this option is not always present and/or evident in other facets of life (Califia 1994). Those with "other" sexual orientations in this study provide the ideal example of CS role fluidity, since they were the most likely to report that their roles had changed since their first experience with CS play and that they expect these roles to change with time, scene and play

partner(s). And, although the heterosexual individuals seemed to be more rigid in their CS identities and CS preferences, they also perform dominance and submission, regardless of their gender. For instance, Stoller (1991: 14) explains that the performance of the bottom/submissive role involves humiliation, suffering, and a "dramatized expression of powerlessness." He also suggests that consensual sadomasochists "make fun of the symbols of authority and the symbolic behavior of domination, not necessarily consciously burlesquing them but using them for recreational purposes," making CS a queer performance (46).

These findings are consistent with Yost (2007), who explains that Switches provide a social space for the challenging of traditional gender norms. She claims that these individuals fantasize in an "in-between space" where fantasies of dominance are as present as fantasies of submission. Although I do not specifically address CS fantasies in this study, I have found that sexual orientation does seem to make a difference in terms of the role that consensual sadomasochists perform, such that those who self-identify as queer, pansexual, lesbian, gay, and/or other are more likely to self-identify as Switch/Versatile and perform these roles. In addition, sexual orientation makes a difference in terms of role fluidity, such that non-heterosexuals' roles are more fluid than those of heterosexuals.

CONCLUSION

These data offered an unprecedented ability to examine gender and sexual orientation in a wide range of CS play, indicating that at least in CS, gender cannot be divorced from sexual orientation, especially in relation to activities involving sexual dominance and submission. The data revealed that sexual orientation is particularly important for understanding Switch/Versatile identities and performances. In addition, the data revealed that role fluidity was much higher

among those with bisexual and "other" sexual orientations than for heterosexuals. I hypothesized that among CS participants, non-heterosexuals would express less traditional gender role playing than heterosexuals, given gender socialization in a patriarchal society that focuses on sex/gender dimorphism as well as heterosexualized desire. However, the actual performance of dominance and submission has an element of gender subversion in that the performers choose their roles and have the opportunity to switch these roles if and when they see fit. Moreover, CS participants have the option to self-identify outside of the prescribed CS roles (SSBM, DMTS, and Switch/Versatile), as is evidenced by several survey participants' selecting "other" CS Role Identities, or multiple identities at one time.

The data also revealed the complexities of participants' experiences with CS role identities and CS role performances, which seemed almost entirely related to their self-identification as "queer" or radical feminists. This indicates that perhaps, as is mentioned by Warner (1993), queer self-understanding requires that the queer individual know about how she is situated within culture; as an "outsider" in a Western culture that has yet to accept queerity as "normal" and "natural," the individual can "pass" as heterosexual and/or "come out" as queer. Regardless of this person's choice, though, Warner explains that, historically, to have a queer sexuality is to be "a political form of embodiment that is defined as noise or interference in the disembodying frame of citizenship" (xx). According to Warner, it is not until individuals in this culture begin to imagine a queer world that heteronormativity is overcome. It seems as though the queer individuals in CS have begun to imagine this queer world in which they switch between dominant and submissive roles that have traditionally been reserved for men and women, respectively. This re-imagination of the world also seems to be occurring for consensual sadomasochists in their experiences of sexual objectification, as is discussed in the next chapter;

in this chapter, participants appear to have positive experiences with consensual sexual

objectification within the CS context, which suggests that perhaps they are experiencing

objectification as autonomy (Nussbaum 1995).

CHAPTER 4

THE CORSET BECOMES US?:

SELF-OBJECTIFICATION FOR CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISTS

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, I discussed queer performances in which consensual sadomasochists enact queerity by switching between dominant and submissive CS roles and/or exhibiting high levels of role fluidity. In these performances, consensual sadomasochists create spaces for the subversion of dominant gender and sex roles; however, these performances largely seem to be related to self-identification as queer, and are thus very intentional challenges to heteronormativity that do not seem to be embraced by all CS participants. Taking this into consideration, I explore other areas of the CS experience that may also help explain how consensual sadomasochists experience and discuss their embodied difference. In this chapter, I examine consensual sadomasochists' encounters with sexual objectification; this is one bodily experience that theorists have suggested makes women, in particular, feel not just different from men, but also shameful for being viewed as different (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997). Difference in the CS context, however, appears not only desirable but is also eroticized by both women and men, such that consensually negotiated sexual objectification is experienced as pleasurable, making this practice counter to heteronormativity where sexual objectification is often non-consensual and displeasurable. I begin this chapter with a brief explanation of the motivations behind participating in CS, then move on to discuss how these motivations also involve what was discussed in the previous chapter as the opportunity to create a "queer" space for the challenging of normative conceptions of sexual objectification.

Scholars have discussed the many different motivations for participation in consensual sadomasochism (CS). Some have claimed that CS, like any other physical sport or exercise, is a useful way to escape the self (Baumeister 1988; Williams 2006), while others have claimed instead that CS encourages self-discovery and exploration (Kleinplatz 2006; Mosher, Levitt, and Manley 2006). Still others explain the motivations behind CS as being multiple and complex, involving: CS as an alternative to "normal genital sexuality" or to transgress/subvert heteronormativity (Hale 1997; Herman 2007; Hopkins 1994; Ritchie and Barker 2005; Stoller 1991); CS as a form of "safer" sex (Beckman 2001); CS for relaxation, transcendence, or as a spiritual journey (Kleinplatz 2006; Nichols 2006); and CS as a source of pleasure and fun (Taylor and Ussher 2001; Thompson 1994). Of these explanations, not one mentioned the potential for consensual sadomasochism to influence self-objectification for women or men who participate in CS, although this could be a real possibility in situations where heteronormativity is subverted and the social contract no longer mandates heterosexual desire. Even when people consciously become involved in CS for reasons other than gender subversion, the very fact that they participate in a sexually "deviant" subculture in which sexual pleasure is sought outside of reproductive goals makes their participation subversive. It is within this context that CS offers the potential for participants to also subvert the negative effects of sexual objectification by re-imagining bodies, pleasures, and sexuality outside of societal norms.

In particular, one scholar's discussion of her experience in CS highlights the ways in which consensual sadomasochists re-imagine bodies, pleasures, and sexuality. In her autoethnography, Butler (1998) identified her four bodily experiences while a participant observer in a fetish club: (1) "lived," or the immediate physical and emotional sensations experienced as a result of embodiment, (2) "ecstatic," or the dramaturgical presentation of self,

(3) "social," or the adornment and thus symbolization of her body, and (4) "political," or the

body's use as an expression of resistance to social control. Here, Butler explains that the body

has many uses and meanings, some related to pleasure and others related to the roles that one

plays in social situations; in each case, the CS participant is aware of her body and its role in CS

play. Similarly, Weeks (1985: 241) explains, "The whole body becomes a seat of pleasure, and

the cultivation of roles and exotic practices the key to the attainment of pleasure." CS play,

therefore, requires that the body remain central to the experience; when they are bound, spanked,

flogged, manipulated, adorned, and disciplined, bodies become objects of pleasure for both the

persons experiencing these things as well as for those who subject bodies to these things. In this

specific context where bodies are sexually objectified, it seems particularly important to

understand whether this sexual objectification negatively impacts the individual's body

satisfaction, since this is what Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) originally theorized in their study

of self-objectification. Before getting into this theory, however, it is equally important to

understand what scholars have said about sexual objectification within the CS context.

In her reaction to feminists who critiqued CS participants for objectifying women in

fetish wear, Califia (1994) mentioned that rather than objectifying women, form-fitting outfits

allow women to feel empowered because it helps them act out dominant and submissive roles,

much like a costume helps a performer "get into character." In this re-imagining of bodies and

pleasures, Califia suggests that when a woman purposely dresses in clothing traditionally meant

to sexually objectify them, they empower themselves to play roles they would not otherwise

experience in heteronormative cultures. Meanwhile, other scholars have conceded that clothing

can have a strong role in sexual objectification, yet they suggest that actively choosing fetish

wear changes the meaning of the objectification. For instance, Connell (2002) explained that

consensual sadomasochists actively participate in disciplinary regimes in the form of restrictive clothing because they seek pleasure, experience, and transformation—all of those things researchers have cited as the motivations behind CS—which is notably different than the experiences Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) claim result from sexual objectification. Further, Nussbaum (1995) explained that consensual sadomasochists completely re-imagine objectification, such that it is experienced positively within the CS context. She states, "Treating-as-violable, as lacking boundary integrity, may well also be consistent with treating-as-autonomous" (261). Consensual sadomasochists thus accept that objectification occurs within the CS context, yet they justify its use within a controlled environment involving mutual consent and consideration, an environment that does not seem to qualify as a sexually objectifying environment (SOEs).

Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr (2011) describe SOEs as environments that involve: (1) traditional gender roles, which also encourage behaviors that normalize the sexual objectification of women; (2) a high probability of male contact, or a male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered environment; (3) unequal distributions of power between men and women, which equate to fewer resources and more low-status positions; (4) the sexualizing of women's bodies, or placing them on display with form-fitting clothing; and (5) the approval and acknowledgement of the male gaze, where women serve as the object and have no control over this objectification. Whereas Califia (1994), Connell (2002), and Nussbaum (1995) directly address the fourth criterion for SOEs, it follows that if women (and men in CS) consent to having their bodies sexualized in a controlled environment, where there are guidelines and limits to the amount of sexualization permitted, then the women in CS also control much (but perhaps not all) of their objectification, which is counter to the fifth criterion for SOEs. In addition, CS

environments, as discussed in the previous chapter, may exhibit some components of traditional gender roles when men perform dominant CS roles and women perform submissive CS roles, although the participants also subvert traditional gender roles when they perform the switch role and when they have high levels of role fluidity. Finally, because CS environments are often "spatially marginalized" (Herman 2007), the attendees are often regulars who gain status for being safe and skilled participants (Newmahr 2008), rather than for having a traditional male status. Thus, CS environments may not qualify as SOEs, although sexual objectification still occurs and researchers have yet to test self-objectification theories on consensual sadomasochists to date.

In this chapter, I test the levels of self-objectification (SO), self-surveillance (SS), body-shame (BS), and body (dis)satisfaction (BASS and AES) on a group of 121 self-identified consensual sadomasochists; this subsample was selected because they answered all of the self-objectification questions on part three of the on-line survey. Using a sociological and feminist lens, I explore these variables with a group of individuals that participate in a subculture explained to have a different experience with sexual objectification than the general population. Considering that the extant self-objectification research has primarily tested self-objectification theories on college-aged Caucasian women, this study significantly contributes to this body of research, with an analysis of these variables on a group of both women (n = 67) and men (n = 52)[14] that vary in age and by sexual orientation. In addition to this quantitative data, the data from the in-depth interviews with 25 self-identified consensual sadomasochists are also presented. Overall, this data contributes to the self-objectification research discussed in the

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[14] Two individuals were "unspecified" for gender, but were kept in the sample because they reported their self-objectification, self-surveillance, body-shame, and body (dis)satisfaction measures in the third section of the survey.

literature review, and more importantly to sociological understandings of the gendered and sexed body in this "deviant" sexual subculture. In the next section, I review the extant research on self-objectification, to further explain the contributions that this study makes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

I begin this section with a review of Self-objectification Theory (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997) and further discuss the benefits of this theory for exploring consensual sadomasochism and those who participate in CS play. Since the extant self-objectification research is extensive, I present and review only those studies that are most relevant to this study and that were published beyond 2000, except for in the review of self-objectification literature. Therefore, this section opens with a general-overview of self-objectification research, which traditionally focused on Caucasian women and girls. It then moves towards more specialized research that examines how self-objectification is experienced in relationship to sexual arousability and pleasure for both men and women. Given that the consensual sadomasochists in this study seek pleasure from non-normative sexual activities, this research is particularly important for understanding the current sample. Finally, this section ends with a review of the literature on how self-objectification is experienced by those of varying sexual orientations, reflecting on the concerns self-objectification poses for the participants in this study who often have complex experiences with not only their sexual orientations, but also their sexual relationships.

Self-Objectification Theory

In 1997, Fredrickson and Roberts offered self-objectification theory as a framework for understanding the ways in which women experience their bodies in a scopic economy where

their bodies are constantly sexually objectified, or viewed and valued for their appearance rather than competence based qualities. The theory posits that women experiencing sexual objectification learn (or are coaxed) to self-objectify because they realize that they are viewed from the male gaze[15] and thus internalize this third perspective. Consequently, women begin regulating their looks so that they may improve their economic and social success and/or reduce the negative consequences for not living up to the cultural ideals of beauty. The problem with current cultural ideals of beauty is that they are both unrealistic and unnatural; Calogero, Boroughs, and Thompson (2007: 270) explain, "The majority of women's bodies have always been, and will continue to be, discrepant from the contemporary ideals of female beauty," because this ideal has emphasized physically incompatible body attributes (e.g., thin bodies with large breasts). Moreover, Grogan (2008: 41) suggests, "Women have always been encouraged to change their shape and weight to conform to current trends," although these trends are mostly based on "fantasy images" of airbrushed women in magazines. With ongoing pressures to conform to unrealistic ideals, then, women and girls experience heightened levels of self-objectification, self-surveillance, and body-shame (Grabe, Hyde, and Lindberg 2006; Greenleaf 2005; Johnston-Robledo et al. 2007; Kozee and Tylka 2006; Slater and Tiggemann 2002; Szymanski and Henning 2007; Tiggemann and Slater 2001). Scholars have also increasingly given attention to the objectification of men and boys (Bordo 1999; Hargreaves and Tiggemann 2006; Rohlinger 2002; Tiggemann and Kuring 2004) and the resultant negative consequences for their happiness, well-being, and body satisfaction (Martins, Tiggemann, and Kirkbride 2007; Tiggemann, Martins, and Churchett 2008).

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[15] Although the "male gaze" implies that men are the active observers and objectifiers and women are the passive individuals objectified, self-objectification research suggests that since men and women are socialized to objectify women, women also actively observe and objectify themselves and other women, but to a lesser extent than men (Hill and Fischer 2008).

More recently, Moradi and Huang (2008) conducted a review of the extant self-objectification research and came to the conclusion that while this research is wide-ranging, it would benefit from further exploration. More specifically, Moradi and Huang recommended that future research test self-objectification theory on women *and* men who vary by racial/ethnic identity, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, and relationship status. Further, researchers should examine other cultures where women's bodies are objectified at different levels and with variations of objectification. The CS sample for this study appears ideal for further testing of objectification theory, then; both men and women of varying sexual orientations, ages, and body-mass index (BMI) engage in objectification when they act as fetishized objects for others/themselves or when they engage in the consensual sexual humiliation of their play partners. Indeed, in their investigation of sexual bondage, Ernulf and Innala (1995) found that one of the top five reasons people became involved in sexual bondage was to enhance the visual enjoyment of their partner(s). This highlights the importance of sexual objectification in CS play, although this objectification seems significantly different from that which involves non-consenting individuals who, as a consequence of objectification, end up experiencing heightened levels of self-surveillance, body-shame, and body dissatisfaction, as is discussed in much of the self-objectification research.

<center>Sexual Pleasure</center>

In addition to experiencing heightened levels of self-surveillance, body-shame, and body dissatisfaction as a consequence of sexual objectification, scholars have also found that this objectification is associated with decreased levels of sexual self-esteem, interest, arousability, and pleasure for both women (Aubrey 2007; Calogero and Thompson 2009; Roberts and

Gettman 2004) and men (Sanchez and Kiefer 2007). Steer and Tiggemann (2008) measured self-objectification, self-surveillance, and body-shame with a sample of undergraduate women in South Australia, and found that increased levels of these variables also resulted in increased levels of appearance anxiety, self-consciousness during sex, and sexual dysfunction. Importantly, relationship status influenced self-consciousness levels in Steer and Tiggemann's study, such that participants in exclusive relationships reported significantly lower levels of self-consciousness than those not in relationships. Similarly, researchers found that relationship contingency for both single and coupled women increased body-shame (Sanchez and Kwang 2007), while relationship priming for single women increased self-objectification, but did not change self-esteem (Sanchez and Broccoli 2007). Whereas relationship status appears to be an important predictor for self-objectification and body-shame, others have found that regardless of relationship status, women who report greater body dissatisfaction also report lower sexual esteem and sexual assertiveness (Weaver and Byers 2006).

For men, however, the research appears more consistent: men who report feeling less comfortable with certain characteristics of their bodies (e.g., sweat and hair) also report lower levels of sexual self-esteem (Schooler and Ward 2006). Given that consensual sadomasochists engage in sexual activities, or at least interact in sexually charged environments, this extant research is important for several reasons. First, it suggests that sexual objectification and sexual pleasure are related in some form for both women and men, which also appears valid for consensual sadomasochists (Califia 1994; Connell 2002; Nussbaum 1995). Second, this research reveals a complex relationship between sexual pleasure and self-objectification, body-shame, and body dissatisfaction; these complexities are attended to in data analyses. Finally, this research implies that women and men who are sexually confident—whether from a romantic relationship

or skill—have less body-shame. For instance, Weiderman (2000: 66) explained of the participants in his study, "The young women who viewed themselves as good sex partners were least concerned about their bodily appearance during physical intimacy, even when holding body size and body dissatisfaction constant." I therefore make hypotheses at the end of this section about women's body-shame in particular, given the societal demand that they constantly regulate these bodies (thru clothing, movements, behaviors, and expressions) so that they may conform to a heteronormative culture.

Sexual Orientation

The major problem with the research cited above is that although it reveals a great deal about how sexual objectification negatively impacts individual's sexual selves, it deals entirely with heterosexual women and men, completely neglecting the impact sexual objectification has on non-heterosexuals' sexual selves. This is particularly important since the research focusing specifically on sexual orientation has largely found that women, regardless of sexual orientation, report similar levels of sexual objectification and thus self-objectification (Hill and Fischer 2008; Kozee and Tylka 2006). However, this research also has mixed results pertaining to the levels of self-surveillance and body-shame that lesbian and heterosexual women report: some have found that lesbians experience considerably less self-surveillance than heterosexual women (Hill and Fischer 2008) while others have found the opposite, that lesbians have greater levels of body surveillance than heterosexual women (Kozee and Tylka 2006). Interestingly, these researchers concluded that women, regardless of sexual orientation, are influenced by Western beauty ideals to the same extent, yet self-surveillance happens at differing levels depending on how much the women internalize these ideals. Hill and Fischer (2008) suggested that further research would

benefit from examining whether being in a lesbian community affects self-surveillance levels; the consensus has been that especially feminist, lesbian women experience less self-surveillance because they have been "protected" by the feminist movement[16] from the negative affects of heterosexist beauty ideals (Wrench and Knapp 2008), although this also occurs for feminist, heterosexual women (Hurt et al. 2007; Murnen and Smolak 2009; Myers and Crowther 2007). Meanwhile, Kozee and Tylka (2006: 355) hypothesized that self-surveillance differs according to how well individuals conform to "culture's heterosexist framework." In other words, women who already do not conform to society, because of their sexual orientations, will spend more time surveying their outer appearance in order to avoid further stigmatization and/or harm.

Scholars examining self-objectification amongst homosexual men have more to say about this phenomenon than those discussing self-objectification amongst lesbian women, perhaps because of the notion that like heterosexual women, gay men are more likely to experience sexual objectification from other men than from women (Kozak, Frankenhauser, and Roberts 2009). Another hypothesis for this difference between gay men and lesbian women is that the gay bar/club culture is highly physical-appearance oriented, highly sexualized, and also more demanding of gay men than lesbian women to conform to the communities' beauty standards (Wrench and Knapp 2008). Nearly all of the research on gay men found that they are more likely to experience self-objectification, self-surveillance, body-shame, and body dissatisfaction than heterosexual men (Martins, Tiggemann, and Kirkbride 2007; Wiseman and Moradi 2010). In a study of the media images geared towards homosexual men, Saucier and Caron (2008) concluded that indeed, men's bodies are objectified in media images similarly to women's

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[16] Rather than a person's participation in the feminist movement and a feminist identity, Peterson, Grippo, and Tantleff-Dunn (2008) explained that a person's feelings of power/powerlessness predicted body concerns.

bodies. They state, "The men depicted in these popular gay magazines fit a particular mold,"

namely that they should be young, attractive, and have good fashion tastes (522). This may be

one of the main reasons Wrench and Knapp (2008) found that the gay/bisexual men in their

study were highly preoccupied with and affected by physical appearance; this group reported

higher levels of image fixation and depression, while lesbian/bisexual women reported higher

levels of self-esteem. Some research on heterosexual men's responses to self-objectification,

however, indicates that they are just as likely as women and homosexual men to experience body

concerns[17], especially when in environments that induce self-surveillance (Hallsworth, Wade,

and Tiggemann 2005; Hebl, King, and Lin 2004; Strelan and Hargreaves 2005).

Given the extant research comparing homosexual and heterosexual women and men on

their self-reported levels of self-objectification, self-surveillance, body-shame, and body

(dis)satisfaction, it seems even more imperative to examine the reported levels of these variables

amongst consensual sadomasochists who often have complex experiences and definitions of their

sexual orientations and sexual relationships. As was mentioned in the introduction of this

dissertation, many participants, but especially the women, in this study did not subscribe to

dichotomous categorizations of sexual orientation; instead, they self-identified as heterosexual

(45.5%, n = 50), bisexual (22.7%, n = 25), queer (16.4%, n = 18), pansexual (6.4%, n = 7),

"other"[18] (5.5%, n = 6), lesbian (1.8%, n = 2), and gay (1.8%, n = 2). For the convenience of this

study, the last five of these seven groups were combined and coded as "other." Since these

individuals self-identified with varying sexual orientations, they probably also experience

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[17] Grabe and Jackson (2009) found that while men experience self-objectification, it is not associated with depressive symptoms like it is for women.

[18] "Others" included those who self-identified as "heteroflexible" (n = 4), "open option" (n = 1), and "bisexual and queer" (n = 1). An additional 11 participants were "unspecified" for sexual orientation.

varying levels of self-surveillance, as is suggested by the research comparing lesbian and heterosexual women.

With this extant literature in mind, I test the following hypotheses for this study:

1. Because consensual sadomasochists often discuss their play as empowering (Califia 1994), especially for women who get to freely choose their CS role in a heteronormative culture that does not as freely allow this choice outside of these niche communities, the differences in body-shame and body dissatisfaction means for women in this study are not significantly different from the means for men. This hypothesis also comes from the knowledge that CS relationships, particularly because they are often non-traditional, require great amounts of communication, intimacy, and even transparency (Kleinplatz 2006) that would presumably make both men and women feel sexually confident and thus less shameful of their bodies.

2. Bisexual and "other" individuals, report higher self-surveillance means than heterosexuals because, as suggested by the self-objectification research cited above, these individuals spend more time monitoring themselves to try and avoid conflicts within their own communities as well as larger society. Although non-heterosexuals also have higher role-fluidity scores, as discussed in Chapter 3, and are thus more likely to change their roles to fit societal norms, they would require more self-surveillance to know what behaviors to change to fit in.

3. Those individuals who identify as SSBM are more likely than all others to report higher levels of self-surveillance, since they are the one's being sexually objectified when their bodies become objects of pleasure. Consequently, those individuals who identify as DMTS, who often take the objectifying role, are more likely than all others

to report higher levels of body satisfaction (BASS and AES) because as tops they are required to emit a sense of control to convince their submissives of their role.

RESULTS

In this section, I test the hypotheses stated above using: (1) t-tests and F-tests to compare group means for self-objectification, self-surveillance, body-shame, and body (dis)satisfaction by gender and sexual orientation (see Table 4.1); (2) correlation matrices to show the relationships between the variables mentioned above, as well as CS Identity and Age (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3); and finally, (3) regression analyses (see Appendix A) to test the relationship between body-shame and body (dis)satisfaction scores based on several control variables, including gender, sexual orientation, age, and body-mass index (BMI). I present the results of these analyses below, along with diagrams of the predicted pathways from self-objectification to body (dis)satisfaction by gender and sexual orientation. I end this section with a discussion of the ways in which the 25 interview participants discussed their bodies and objectification within the CS context; this data is particularly useful for understanding the nuances of sexual objectification for CS participants.

Difference in Means by Gender and Sexual Orientation

According to the t-tests and F-tests by gender and sexual orientation there were two significant differences in self-surveillance and body-shame. For self-surveillance, women's mean scores were significantly higher than men's mean scores (t (117) = -2.936, p ≤ 0.004). The correlations (see Table 4.2 in Appendix A) also reveal the significant, positive relationship between gender and self-surveillance, such that being a heterosexual woman is correlated with

higher levels of self-surveillance. The mean scores of every other variable in Table 4.1 (see Appendix A), however, were not significantly different by gender; as predicted in Hypothesis 1, the differences in body-shame and body-dissatisfaction means for women and men are not significantly different.

By sexual orientation, however, body-shame differs significantly. The F-test for this group of individuals reveals that the mean body-shame score for bisexual individuals is significantly higher than for those who have "other" sexual orientations and for heterosexuals (F $(2, 107) = 1.861$, p ≤ 0.007). Correlations between sexual orientation and all other variables for men and women (see Table 4.3 in Appendix A), however, were not significant, probably relating to the sample size. A larger sample size by sexual orientation would also likely change the results of the F-test for self-surveillance; although the F-test is not significant, it reveals that as I had expected in Hypothesis 2, bisexuals and those who have "other" sexual orientations have higher mean self-surveillance scores than heterosexuals.

<div align="center">Correlations by Gender and Sexual Orientation</div>

Unexpectedly, self-objectification only had one significant correlation for men, and no significant correlations for heterosexuals; for men, there is a negative correlation between self-objectification and self-surveillance, whereas for women, there are negative correlations between self-objectification and self-surveillance and between self-objectification and body-shame. Also, considering sexual orientation, there are negative relationships between these same variables that were negative for women. These relationships for women and non-heterosexuals are particularly noteworthy because in the extant research, the relationships between self-objectification and self-surveillance and between self-objectification and body-shame have been significantly positive,

especially for women and regardless of sexual orientation (Kozee and Tylka 2006; Mitchell and Mazzeo 2009; Moradi, Dirks, and Matteson 2005; Tiggemann and Slater 2001). The correlation matrices also reveal significantly positive relationships between self-surveillance and body-shame for women and non-heterosexuals, which were expected, considering Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) hypothesis that self-objectification leads to self-surveillance, resulting in body-shame and ultimately body dissatisfaction.

In regards to Hypothesis 3, the significant correlations between any variables relating to CS Identity only exist for men and by sexual orientation. In other words, CS Identity for women seems to have no correlation with self-objectification and its consequences. Men who self-identify as both SSBM and DMTS, however, have negative correlations for self-surveillance, which means that the first part of Hypothesis 3—SSBM identity is significantly related to higher levels of self-surveillance—is at least partially unfounded since this was only the case for men and not women. There is also a negative correlation between DMTS and self-surveillance for heterosexuals, though there is no evidence for men, women, heterosexuals, or non-heterosexuals that a DMTS identity is significantly correlated to body satisfaction. Again, this suggests that the second half of Hypothesis 3—DMTS identity is significantly related to higher levels of body satisfaction—is also unproven, but could change with a larger and more random sample size since the correlations between all CS identities and the body satisfaction measures are positive.

<center>Pathway Analyses</center>

The data from the correlations provide a relatively accurate picture for the pathways between self-objectification and body (dis)satisfaction by gender and sexual orientation. These correlations show negative relationships between self-objectification and self-surveillance and

between self-objectification and body-shame. Also, there are negative relationships between

body-shame and the two measures of body satisfaction (BASS and AES), and a strong positive

relationship between self-surveillance and body-shame. The figures presented below represent

Figure 1
Path Diagrams of the Self-Objectification Model for (a) Women (n = 69) and (b) Men (n = 54).

(a) Women
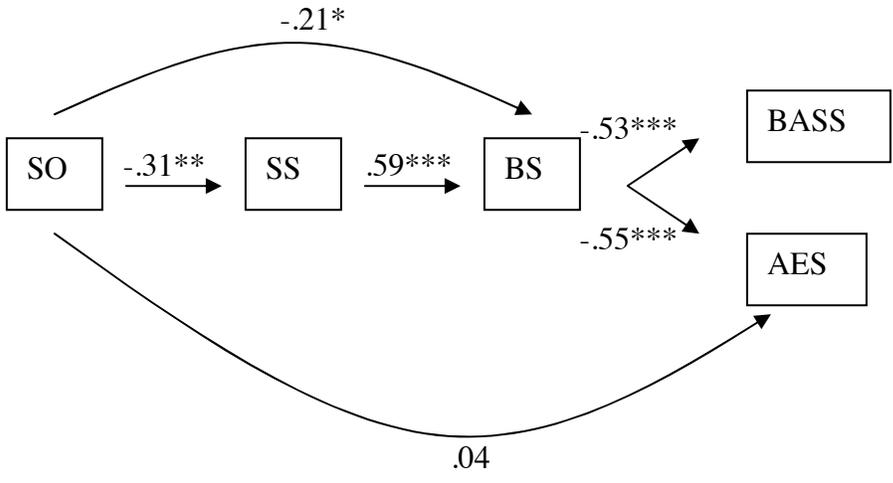
(b) Men
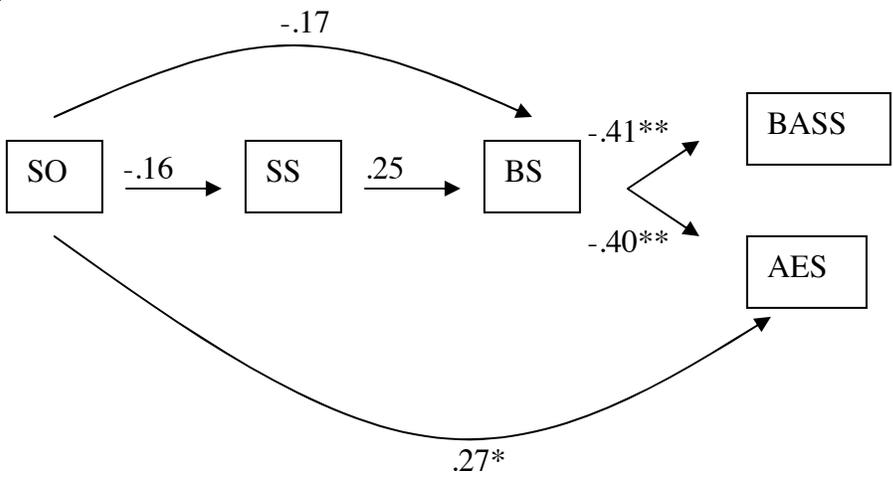
Note: SO, self-objectification; SS, self-surveillance; BS, body-shame; BASS, body area
satisfaction; AES, appearance evaluation.
*p ≤ .05
**p ≤ .01
***p ≤ .001

the pathway analyses run to test the relationships between variables. The four diagrams, by

gender (see Figure 1) and sexual orientation (see Figure 2), reveal that the pathways for women

and non-heterosexuals are far more complex than those for men and heterosexuals. In fact, it

Figure 2
*Path Diagrams of the Self-Objectification Model for (a) Non-Heterosexuals (n = 71) and
(b) Heterosexuals (n = 50).*

(a) Non-heterosexuals
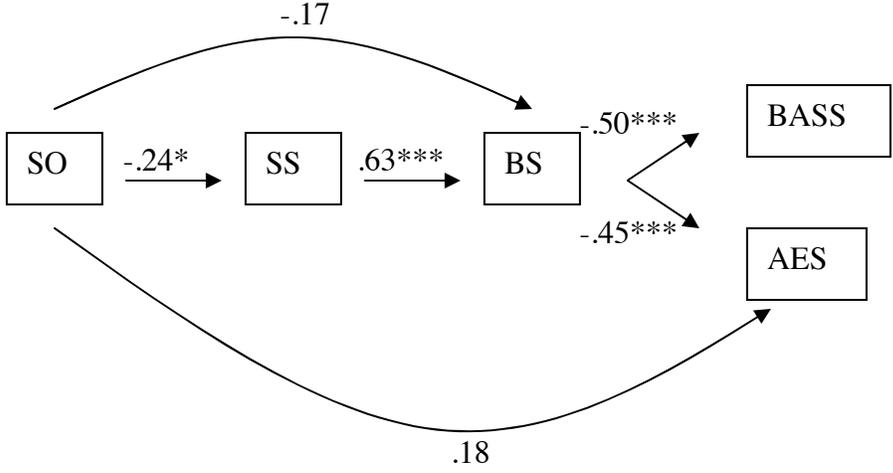
(b) Heterosexuals
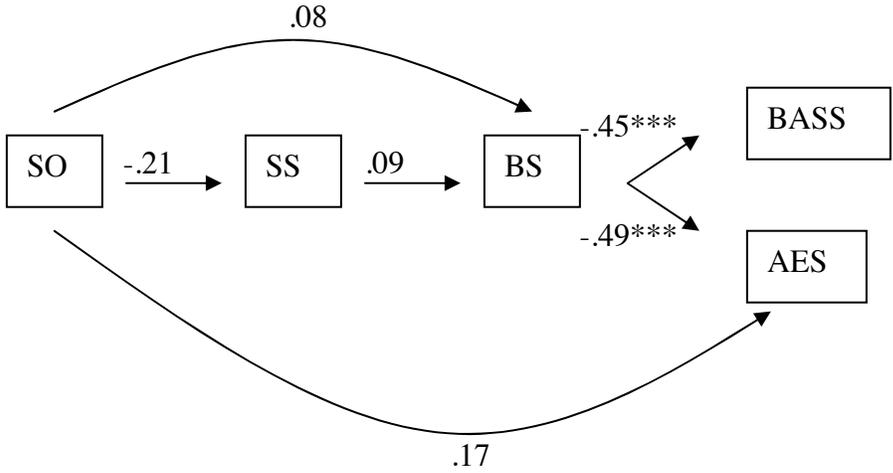
Note: SO, self-objectification; SS, self-surveillance; BS, body-shame; BASS, body area
satisfaction; AES, appearance evaluation.
*p ≤ .05
**p ≤ .01
***p ≤ .001

appears as though the only significant relationships between self-objectification and body satisfaction for men are direct, whereas these relationships are mediated by self-surveillance and body-shame for women. Additional regression analyses verifying these mediating relationships, and controlling for gender, sexual orientation, age, and body-mass index (BMI) are presented in Table 4.4 (see Appendix A). These analyses also show (in Model 3) that the strongest predictors for AES are BMI, self-objectification and body-shame, and gender is only a strong predictor of AES when self-objectification and self-surveillance are considered (in Model 2), but not body-shame.

CS Participants' Reactions to Objectification

The data above provides some interesting and important insight into how self-objectification appears to work for CS participants, as a group. However, this data also neglects to answer some important questions about how objectification is phenomenologically experienced by individual CS participants. As a mixed-methods study of self-objectification, I rely on anecdotal evidence, and specifically on the in-depth interviews with 25 self-identified consensual sadomasochists, to reveal the nuances of this experience. During interviews, all self-identified CS participants were asked to describe their bodies as well as how they felt about their bodies before, during, and after CS play. In addition, they were asked to discuss their relationships to their bodies throughout their lives, and how they think that others within their lives (from childhood forward) view their bodies. Although their beliefs about how others view them is often unsubstantiated information, it is also important for understanding how their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of their own bodies appear in their narratives about others in their

lives. This method for understanding consensual sadomasochists' stories of embodied CS experience has been effectively utilized by scholars before (Newmahr 2008).

Newmahr (2008) asked consensual sadomasochists to discuss their life stories which consequently involved discussions of how others within their lives viewed them. Similar to her finding that CS participants have histories of marginality, the participants in this study often discussed feeling different from their peers in school and early adulthood. In Newmahr's research, many participants claimed a "sense of living on the periphery of normative social interaction" that had existed since childhood (631). Some of this peripheral living was a result of their perceived "geekiness" and "freakishness" with above average levels of intelligence; some of it was a result of their body size and gender ambiguity. However, her participants ultimately discussed finding a "home" within the CS community. One transgender switch in this study, Mz. Mira, is the prime example of Newmahr's story. Mz. Mira felt particularly marginal having been born with a congenital condition in which she was required to take hormones to induce puberty during her teenage years. She explains:

> There was a certain point at which I was told you have to take hormones for your body to grow…So I took testosterone…I didn't really understand what was going on. I identified provisionally as a boyish or, say, gay male, but I knew in some ways that I was not really sufficient. And I had been having fantasies of being female for years. So, at this point, I was still sort of uncertain and confused. I was like, "well this thing is like a matter of life and death so I better do it." And I did it. And it was a terrifying somatic experience.

Terrifying, mostly because her body reacted aggressively towards the hormones, but also because she lost her "prized high voice" and felt that her body was no longer her own.

Mz. Mira began feeling alienated from her body as well as her community. She explained that she went to an alternative high school in one of the wealthiest counties in the Western United States and described herself as "suffering from being a decently intelligent

individual" that "love[s] the interrelated liberal/nerd subcultures" in an area that was lacking any diversity; she states, "I was so deeply alienated by that place." It wasn't until she moved out of her hometown and became involved in a local CS community that she began to feel comfortable, which was a new feeling for her.

Mz. Mira also mentioned that while in the dungeon, she generally has an interest in the motherly type, in both body—short and stocky—and attitude—those who enjoy "being serviced" by their "little girl," or enjoy having their submissive do "menial" tasks for the dominant's own pleasure. She also clarified that she consciously keeps aware of the body types she enjoys so as not to become too caught up in Western ideals of beauty that do not account for bodies such as her own. She states:

> [My partner preference] is also a product of body fetishism. I try to be aware and conscious of that and not overemphasize it too much, because I don't want to have an overemphasis of the things that people were born with and couldn't make a choice either way…As somebody whose body type is popularly more wild and considered illegitimate and socially unacceptable, I think those people are full of shit and need to reconsider their position.

Here, Mz. Mira described "those people" as the individuals who use the "kinky" identity as a "free ticket to put huge amounts of emphasis on people's body types," which was beyond problematic to her.

Having stated her opinion about her own phenomenological experiences with CS, Mz. Mira ended the interview with a statement of the value of CS and a cautionary note about being negatively objectified:

> [CS] has certainly given me an avenue for appreciating my body…Nobody outside of fetishists and kinksters seem to really appreciate what I have to offer, simply because outside of fetishist and kinksters, there is very limited verbal selection of desirable things…[However,] there was a time when I thought, "well, being trans means that no one is ever going to be attracted to me ever again except for yucky tranny fetishists," and I continue to find that very creepy.

Most problematic in being fetishized as a transgender individual is that Mz. Mira experiences

being objectified to the point of becoming a mish-mash of body parts rather than a human being

with feelings, thoughts, and desires. Moreover, Mz. Mira explained that those "middle-aged

white men" who tend to fetishize transgender folks fail to comprehend what it means to be

transgendered and only see people like herself as novelties, using derogatory terms such as "dick

girl" and "she male" to refer to her and other transgender individuals.

Despite Mz. Mira's experience being rather unique in regards to her experience as a

transgender person in the CS community, it was not uncommon to hear interviewees explain the

draw of CS and its positive influence on how they viewed and experienced their bodies. For

instance, Sylvia, another switch participant, who described her battle with being over-weight

before involvement in CS explained that she initially gained body satisfaction after she had the

opportunity to model fetish wear on her own website. She reveals, "It kind of healed my mind

and my self-esteem by the response that I got in my group on [this website] that I wasn't ugly,

that I wasn't disgusting, that I had talent, and that I was on a shoe-string budget pulling out fairly

decent photos." Similarly, Jennifer, a switch who had grown up dancing as a ballerina from

childhood into her teenage years, explained that once she had children and her body changed, she

found a different way to feel comfort in her body through fetish modeling.

> I think finally getting out in the community, you see there are a lot of overweight
> people in the community…but you see these overweight people, who, they put on
> their fetish wear and they go out in public and they are proud…and then they get
> naked, and they are still proud, and they are playing proudly naked.

Although there was no significant correlation between private versus public play and body

satisfaction among CS participants, there is clearly something to be said about being nude in

front of an audience (even an audience of one) that accepts "deviant" bodies or bodies that do not

fit Western ideals of beauty. Bskyler, a submissive and slave, suggested that in all reality, the

Western ideal of beauty is unattainable and ultimately non-realistic. He mentions that for men, "the whole muscle bound thing is pure vanity" and serves no purpose in the CS community where people need skill rather than muscle. Likewise, several men, like Eternal Student and Grey (both dominants), and Jack Noir and Jake the Switch (both switches), explained that they were "open-minded" when it came to selecting partners. Grey, having been publicly involved in CS for about 12 years, explains:

> Physical attraction is not nearly as important to me as personality; I have played with all types of people, short, tall, fat, thin, there are a large number of large people in the lifestyle. And I think it is because the lifestyle is more accepting of a variety of body types….It does not seem to be as, you know, there are always people who are looking for the ideal body shape or, they are looking for young, slim women or whatever. To a large extent, people are more interested in the personality, the attitude than in the physical makeup.

Grey also suggested that his own body satisfaction was partially influenced by having his own amateur CS website where he and his wife were featured for a length of time. Also, he claimed that part of being a dominant and master was being able to convey to your partner(s) that you are confident in your role as well as your body.

Overall, the participants' stories about CS seem to counter the quantitative data that suggests a statistically non-significant relationship between CS identity and body satisfaction; moreover, these stories support the theories, by Califia (1994), Connell (2002), and Nussbaum (1995), described earlier in the introduction that self-objectification theory fails to adequately address the CS context. Moreover, the type of sexual objectification occurring within the CS context that is at least partially negotiated and fully consensual seems to offer participants a new way of viewing their bodies and therefore a new way of viewing sexual objectification that is admittedly different from the sexual objectification experienced by those who do not consent to the experience. In the next section, I discuss some of the nuances of CS that might help to better

explain self-objectification within this context and some of the reasons that the pathway analyses show negative relationships between self-objectification and self-surveillance, and between self-objectification and body-shame. I begin the next section with a brief discussion of the differences in samples (survey versus interview) that may help explain why the data are revealing different stories of self-objectification within CS.

DISCUSSION

The survey sample, a group of 121 individuals who mostly play in private, were specifically asked to respond to five measures of self-objectification and its consequences. These participants were not given room to explain their survey choices and thus their stories of objectification are limited to these measures. Based on the data gathered from these participants, it appears as though only self-surveillance and body-shame minimally differ by gender and sexual orientation, such that women have higher mean self-surveillance scores than men and heterosexuals have lower mean body-shame scores than non-heterosexuals. Also, the correlations between self-objectification and self-surveillance were significantly negative for women and men while the correlation between self-objectification and body-shame was significantly negative only for women. Finally, only women showed a significantly positive correlation between self-surveillance and body-shame and a significantly negative correlation between self-surveillance and body satisfaction (BASS), while only men showed a significantly negative correlation between SSBM and DMTS identities and self-surveillance. Considering that the women in this sample were also more likely than the men to self-identify as non-heterosexual while the men were more likely than the women to self-identify as heterosexual, similar correlational patterns were revealed when controlling for sexual orientation, except that

non-heterosexuals had significant correlations (both positive and negative) between CS identity and self-objectification and self-surveillance; this was not the case for women.

In comparison to the first sample, the interviewees spent anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours discussing their CS practices and experiences of their bodies. Given the freedom to direct the conversation, many interviewees described the CS communities in which they participate as well as the ways in which their own CS participation had changed since their initial introduction to their communities. At least half of the 25 interviewees discussed playing in public settings (i.e., public dungeons, clubs, and/or events) while another quarter of the participants discussed playing in on-line CS communities. This was not the case for the survey participants who mostly (75.8%) play in private settings (i.e., their own home or a friend's/neighbor's home). Notably, data analyses comparing participants based on public versus private CS play did not result in significant findings, although it was clear during interviews that play setting made a huge difference for participants in that it requires quite a bit of comfort with one's own body in order to be nude (or even nearly nude) in front of a public audience. This leads me to believe that the quantitative data may significantly change with a larger subsample of CS participants who play in public. Even with an unequal distribution of public versus private players, however, both samples reveal something important about self-objectification theory and its limits: this theory is based on the assumption that the sexual objectification of individuals is both non-consensual and non-negotiated.

In an environment that appears, as an outsider, to align with the core requirements of what Szymanski, Moffitt, and Carr (2011) aptly name "sexually objectifying environments," the outsider might conclude that the sexual objectification of people, but particularly women, in consensual sadomasochism is detrimental to the individual and to society. In fact, as was

discussed in the previous chapter, radical feminists from the 1980s decided that this was the case when they argued that CS replicates patriarchy by placing women in submissive positions to dominant men. Although no known scholars have addressed these implications for body-satisfaction, it can be reasonably hypothesized that if women were experiencing the same patriarchy within the CS context as they experienced in non-CS contexts (i.e., the community, workplace, and home) then they would also experience the same negative effects of the male gaze and sexual objectification as those women who do not participate in CS activities and communities. The current study did not compare CS participants to non-CS participants, but given the extant self-objectification research that shows a clear positive path from self-objectification to body dissatisfaction, is seems plausible that negotiated and consensual sexual objectification can have significant, positive relationships to body satisfaction; the data from this study show a particularly significant relationship between self-objectification and body satisfaction for men. Further, the data reveal that the sexual confidence CS interviewees claimed they developed from participating in CS also made them less shameful and more satisfied with their bodies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the current study significantly contributes to the existing self-objectification and CS scholarship in many ways. First, it tests the limits of self-objectification theory on a group of individuals that vary by sexual orientation and gender identity, and in a subculture that has been theorized to have wildly different ideas from general society about relationships, sexuality, and attractiveness. Thus, this study fills several of the gaps in the self-objectification literature that Moradi and Huang (2008) claimed would benefit from further

exploration. In addition, theorists such as Califia (1994), Connell (2002), and Nussbaum (1995) have discussed sexual objectification within the CS context, yet no scholars to date have explored actual objectification measures for consensual sadomasochists. This seems particularly important given the strong emphasis on the phenomenological experience of consensual sadomasochism and its powerful benefits, namely pleasure (Butler 1998; Weeks 1985). Moreover, self-objectification researchers suggest that certain environments have the potential to "protect" certain individuals from the harms of self-objectification (Hallsworth 2005; Hurt et al. 2007; Murnen and Smolak 2009; Myers and Crowther 2007 Wrench and Knapp 2008). Based on the current study's findings, it appears as though the CS environment has the potential to do just this by empowering individuals to openly negotiate the limits of consensual, sexual objectification and to re-imagine their bodies as objects of pleasure. In this sense, and as discussed in the previous chapter, the CS environment is one in which even non-queer folks are aware of "cultural norms about the bearing of the body" (Warner 1993: xiii) and use this knowledge to challenge the institutions that demand "perfect" bodies.

Despite the contributions that this study makes to self-objectification and CS research and literature, it is not without its limitations. Like much of the CS and self-objectification research, the two samples in this study were racially/ethnically uniform. As is discussed in the next chapter, these demographics have real consequences for understanding a subculture that has also developed its own ethnically diverse subcultures. Future research in the area of consensual sadomasochism, in particular, would benefit from oversampling racial/ethnic minorities who have also been shown to have different experiences with self-objectification (Breitkopf and Littleton 2007; Harrison and Fredrickson 2003; Moradi and Huang 2008). With the sample that I do have, however, quite a bit can be said about the participants' discourses of race and ethnicity.

In the next chapter, I elaborate on these discourses and discuss them within a critical race theory

framework.

CHAPTER 5

THE WAGES OF KINK:

DISCOURSES OF RACE AND ETHNICITY IN CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISM

INTRODUCTION

As was mentioned in the previous two data chapters, the number of racial/ethnic minorities in this sample was low with only about 10% of the total sample (n = 259) self-identifying as racial/ethnic minorities. Even in comparison to the U.S. racial/ethnic distribution, this percentage of minorities who participate in CS is low; the U.S. Census Bureau estimated the racial/ethnic minority population at about 20% (United States Census Bureau 2011). Although the racial/ethnic minority sample size in this study was too small to conduct comparison analyses between groups, I did find that the participants' discourses around their experiences with race and ethnicity in their own CS communities showed significant patterns. In this chapter, therefore, I discuss participants' perceptions of the reasons that racial and ethnic minorities are less visible in the CS community. As is clear throughout this chapter, the participants largely focused on two themes relating to Bourdieu's (1986) concepts of cultural and social capital, which, as in the previous data chapters, relate to participants' experiences of bodily difference within the CS context. In other words, the participants who self-identified as White/Caucasian mostly explained their experiences with race/ethnicity in the CS context as an experience of capital, erasing the notion that capital involves privilege and at times is related to exclusionary practices. I begin this chapter with a discussion of what sexual researchers have concluded in regards to race and ethnicity in CS and further explain the importance of examining the discourses around race and ethnicity for better understanding CS participants bodily experiences.

Langdridge and Barker (2007) noted that the intersectionalities of race, ethnicity, and sexuality are missing from much of the CS scholarship. They also claim, "the overwhelming whiteness of writing on S/M is something that deeply troubles us" (6). This "whiteness" of CS scholarship is evident in the extant CS research dating from the 1970s on in which most of the authors discussing CS appear to be not only White/Caucasian, but also Westerners. In addition, regardless of study methods, the CS studies' sample participants have largely identified as White/Caucasian, indicating that CS is a phenomenon largely practiced and researched by Whites/Caucasians (Bauer, 2007; Dancer, Kleinplatz, and Moser, 2006; Kolmes, Stock, and Moser, 2006; Moser and Levitt, 1987; Mosher, Levitt, and Manley, 2006; Taylor and Ussher, 2001; Yost, 2007). Indeed, after four years of ethnographic fieldwork in a CS community in the Northeastern U.S., Newmahr (2008: 628) claims, "people of color are so rare" in the community she studied that she would have liked to have had a more inclusive sample. I also, would have liked to have had a more inclusive sample, as the overall sample in this study of self-identified consensual sadomasochists consisted of 89.8% (n = 230) individuals who self-identified as White/Caucasian; the remaining 10.2% (n = 26) of the participants self-identified as racial/ethnic minorities and fell into one of nine different racial/ethnic categories (seven of these self-identified as bi- and multi-racial and three were "unspecified").[19] In addition, of the 25 interviewees, 23 self-identified as White/Caucasian, one as Chicana, and one as biracial, Black and White.

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[19] 4.2% of the overall sample self-identified as Hispanic, Spanish, or Latino/a.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The over-representation of Whites/Caucasians in both the existing CS scholarship and the current study beg the question as to what is happening within the CS context to allow for the under-representation of racial and ethnic minorities. Since I do not have the data to investigate the reasons behind these disproportionate participation rates, I instead focus on the discourses surrounding these participation rates. In other words, I sorted through the interview data for themes relating to how participants discussed race and ethnicity within the CS context. I found that participants explained race and ethnicity in relation to CS play in one of two ways: they explained their own participation and the lack of ethnic minority participation as related to either their (lack of) access to social capital or to cultural capital. Those who utilized the social capital framework to discuss race and ethnicity in CS explained that they became involved in consensual sadomasochism because they had networked with friends/partners who also happened to be involved in the CS community (although they also situated this networking opportunity in relation to liberalism, which I analyze more in-depth later in this paper). Meanwhile, those who utilized the cultural capital framework explained their CS involvement as a result of their access to monetary and educational resources. I discuss both of these discourses more in-depth after first explaining both forms of capital and their relationship to race and ethnicity.

Social Capital

Although not the first to discuss social capital, Bourdieu (1986) is one of the most notable sociologists to define the concept. He explains, "social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (248). In other words,

social capital involves social networking that has the potential to produce resources (i.e.,

economic and cultural capital) and power for those involved in the network. Individuals do not

always consciously seek these networking opportunities; instead, Bourdieu claims that

networking is a result of institutionalization that presupposes the exchange of knowledge and

recognition. In this sense, social capital involves race, class, gender, and sexual orientation since

these individual and group orientations are both institutionalized and provide individuals with a

sense of membership. Most important for social capital, however, is a "great name": "because

they are well known, [they] are worthy of being known" (250). This also appears to be the case

for consensual sadomasochists who build status as (or obtain the name of) a "safe" and "skilled"

player and/or active community member (Hopkins 1994; Newmahr 2008; Rubin 1987).

However, the consequences of said naming in race relations are multiple and first require a brief

explanation of the power behind the naming process.

Naming "Race"

Throughout the history of the United States, laws have functioned to reify racial identities

(López 2000). According to López, race is an "ongoing, contradictory, self-reinforcing, plastic

process subject to macro forces of social and political struggle and the micro effects of daily

decisions" that exists in all bodies of law (165). Therefore, race is a direct reflection of power

that involves *all* people, not just those of ethnic minority status. Unlike sexuality (Foucault

1978), however, it appears that discourses of race have not multiplied; rather, these discourses

have remained relatively stable. López claimed that despite the influence of race in U.S. law,

very few individuals are able or willing to define race because it is deemed irrelevant or when

relevant, indefinable. Even scientific discourses have had difficulties defining race, as there are

no biological or genetic differences between the races. According to Fausto-Sterling (2005: 21), "Human racial difference, while in some sense obvious and therefore 'real,' is in another sense pure fabrication, a story written about the social relations of a particular historical time and then mapped onto available bodies." Ultimately, race is a social construct that has economic and political implications that are also tied to gender and class hierarchies.

Frankenberg (1993: 11) made the connection between race and gender when she stated, "Race, like gender, is 'real' in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and [a] real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals' sense of self, experiences, and life chances." Like gender, race has economic and political significance; consequently, at certain times in the U.S. history, some racial/ethnic groups have been included in and excluded from the census category "White/Caucasian" because of the "changing set of exclusionary practices" produced by racist discourses and practices that focus on difference (12). These discourses and practices of difference help to reinforce inequalities based on "us/them" and "self/other" dichotomies where the raced, classed, gendered, and sexualized "others" are deemed unruly and thus threatening, subaltern and thus disposable (Aldama and Arteaga 2003). Accordingly, Whites/Caucasians occupy positions of economic and political power, although to varying degrees based on gender, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Historians such as Roediger (1991: 8) remind us, however, "racism must be set in class and economic contexts." More so, race comes to represent not only status but also a form of capital in societies that engage in discourses and practices of difference; Roediger aptly describes this as the "wage of whiteness"[20] which ultimately comes to exist as cultural capital.

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[20] This concept was borrowed from W. E. B. DuBois who described the "psychological wages" of whiteness as involving academic, economic, and political privileges.

Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1986) explains cultural capital as an institutionalized form of capital that may include educational qualifications and is sometimes converted into economic capital. Often times, he claims, cultural capital depends on social capital, or an inherited name/status. Cultural capital, however, exists in three states: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. In the embodied state, individuals assimilate their bodies into a particular cultural state of being. As such, these individuals spend time learning about and then adopting the comportment of the desired culture, although this process is often unconscious. The example that Bourdieu explains involves reading: "being able to read in a world of illiterates…yields profits of distinction for its owner" (248). Those that are able to read, ensure their upper-class status, which also guarantees that the lower-class individuals (who cannot afford to send their children to school beyond the minimum necessary) continue working as laborers, as do their children. In a Marxian sense, then, the upper-classes by way of cultural capital accumulate cultural goods (including laborers) and use these good to obtain and maintain social capital. The objectified state consists of objects and media (e.g., writings and paintings) that can be used to gain economic capital. The individual that has the means to purchase these products must also have the knowledge of how to use them. Finally, in the institutionalized state, cultural capital exists as legally guaranteed qualifications (e.g., academic certificates and degrees of competence) that have "the power to show forth and secure belief or, in a word, to impose recognition" (248). Cultural capital, thus, involves the acquirement of resources that are used to gain and maintain social capital; the acquirement of said resources, however, is strongly related to privilege in society.

The "Unnamed" of Race

Scholars who have examined white privilege from a law standpoint (esp. Harris 1993 and Lipsitz 1998) explain that individuals have a literal and figurative investment in whiteness. Lipsitz (1998: vii) explains, "Whiteness has a cash value…[it] provides [white Americans] with resources, power, and opportunity." Whether this includes economic resources, educational opportunities, or social prestige, whiteness is regardless an investment with real advantages for those that are allowed to claim this identity. In other words, whiteness is a form of social capital, or power (Bourdieu 1986)[21] that is used to gain status and resources. Whiteness, therefore, is regulated; only certain individuals throughout history have been allowed to claim this identity and obtain the privileges associated with the identity. As a political and economic system, whiteness is regulated through discursive formations, as mentioned above, that focus on differences that are often based on skin color, hair texture, eye shape, nose size, etc. In this sense, all individuals can choose to engage in this system (i.e., by participating in the exclusion of "others"), yet not all individuals will be rewarded with the same privileges; for example, an ethnic minority may exclude other ethnic minorities and still experience economic and political discrimination and oppression (Lipsitz 1998). The choice to engage in this system, however, is not always presented as a choice; at times it is presented as a norm and therefore invisible to those who already have the privileges associated with whiteness. Frankenberg (1993) explained this as the effect of colonial discourse where the White/Western self is unmarked and unnamed:

> To be "unmarked" is to occupy a position of privilege, in which the subject hides behind an apparent transparency. White individuals, for instance, are in the constant state of passing as having no ethnic or racial identity at all, as having

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[21] Bourdieu utilized a Foucaultian framework in claiming that capital involves the use of resources (e.g., knowledge) to obtain status and is therefore associated with power. Whereas Foucault worked at the level of discourse, Bourdieu worked at the level of practice.

> "nothing to say" about race, or as somehow existing outside the volatile world of
> "racial tensions" (Schlossberg, as cited in Danielson 2009: 36).

As the "unmarked," Danielson explains that white individuals (as well as heterosexuals and men)

are located at the center of social discourse; this center location connotes both power and

privilege, and the closer to the center one is, the more resources/capital they have at their

disposal (Hurtado 1989). Indeed, Dyer (1997: 2) explains that because white people are racially

unseen and unnamed, they function as the human norm that "speak for the commonality of

humanity."

Sheela (2008) provides an excellent example of how the naming process and the position

of the unnamed is experienced within the CS context, albeit from across the world. In her

unpublished dissertation of ethnic minority, consensual sadomasochists in Singapore, Sheela

explained that the cultural capital some of her participants had (i.e., education and "cosmopolitan

identity") resulted in their preference for the term "BDSM" over "SM." On the other hand, the

Singapore middle-class Chinese males (SCM), with less cultural capital or access to knowledge,

adopted the term "SM" from the medical community's pathologization of CS practices. Thus,

the men without cultural capital ended up adopting a name created by Western doctors and

psychologists who were most likely speaking from the position of the "unnamed" and

"unmarked" described above. Ultimately, Sheela explained that the adoption of this

pathologized term resulted in unique CS bodily experiences for her participants. In addition,

Sheela found that those men without access to cultural capital also displayed an increased

proclivity to CS because they identified the practice as a status marker (46). This indicates that

the participants in Sheela's study, like my own, used discourses based in social and cultural

capital frameworks to describe their experiences with consensual sadomasochism. I discuss

these discourses further in the following findings section.

RESULTS

The Social Capital of CS

Reputations and "great names" in the CS community are often achieved through participation in events and clubs at specific CS venues, as was reported by Jake the Switch, a White/Caucasian man, in the current study:

> The people who have earned the title of master that's not just thrown around as a, as a what's the word I am looking for, an adjective to their name…Like the owners of the [local CS organization], he is a master at fire play. If you wanna know anything about fire play you go to him; he will tell you. He's earned that title; I have not earned my title yet. So yeah, that's getting that kind of respect, you know if he does a fire scene he does it safe and it is gonna look really good…Whereas if you are not looking safe, if you are not looking good, if it looks like a bad scene, people are gonna be kinda leery of you and so there is a lot of prep work.

Here, Jake the Switch, mentions that even beyond attending an event, people that want to gain status in the community also have to network with those individuals that already have status. A "great name," then, comes from active participation and networking. Once individuals have networked, however, they gain social capital from being able to say that they trained with a particular dominant or even played with a particular dominant as a submissive. Or, participants gain a sense of belonging that they had not felt prior, which is another benefit of social capital. Jennifer, a White/Caucasian woman, explained these benefits after having just left her church and finding the CS community:

> I grew up in the church where there is like a sense of community, and everybody is supposed to take care of everybody…[but] when my marriage started falling apart like they just told me I need to go home and pray and obey my husband and just deal with it… So I felt like my community wasn't there for me. On the flip side, I am now starting to see how the BDSM community actually has a lot more of the qualities that a Christian community is suppose to have.

Since community membership appears particularly important for gaining social capital, I examined several aspects of the survey data to try and determine to what extent community membership affected participants' experiences of social capital. In this study, 45.2% of the participants reported feeling like a member of a CS community and 52.5% said that feeling like a CS community member was positive. Interestingly, only 21.0% of these participants reported actually playing in public settings where it would seem more plausible to network and gain social status. However, with the growth of internet use and with it an increased opportunity to network, it appears as though even CS networking websites, such as those from which my participants were recruited, allow for significant gains in social capital. For instance, Sylvia, a White/Caucasian woman, explained that after she created an internet profile so that she could model for fetishists, she met a considerable number of people through this avenue and thus she gained a name for herself as a fetish model.

Another aspect of social capital that was important for consensual sadomasochists was their ability to "come out" as kinky and subsequently have support from their loved ones. In statistical analyses of these things, I found strong relationships between feelings of community membership and having emotional support from an individual or group, as well as having told friends, spouses, co-workers, and especially family about ones involvement in CS practices. For instance, those individuals who reported feeling like a CS community member were 3.13 times as likely as those who did not feel like a CS community member, to report having told a family about their involvement in CS ($x^2 = 11.647$, $p \leq .001$) and 1.72 times as likely to report having emotional support about CS involvement from an individual or group ($x^2 = 36.836$, $p \leq .001$). The "coming out" process, although potentially beneficial to those wanting to freely enjoy their

kinks in public, however, requires social capital that is not yet available to all sexual minorities.[22]

For instance, Chris, a White/Caucasian man explains:

> I was talking to slave Rick…and we were talking about the concept of being "out" in that aspect and he looked at me and he said, when you talk about being "out" are you talking about being out as gay or being out as kinky? I said kinky and he said, "Oh, you can't do that." I said, "why not?" He said, "because they still look upon this as being sexual sadism and they will look upon you as a security risk. You just can't do that…" The BDSM community is probably 20 to 30 years behind the gay, the gay and lesbian, transgendered community in terms of our ability to be out.

Similarly, Sylvia states, "I never had a problem coming out as bisexual…Like, that has never been a problem." So, social capital helps participants explain their CS participation to a certain extent, yet they still struggle with obtaining the social capital necessary to "come out" as kinky. These discourses around "coming out" and gaining social capital within the community are particularly interesting considering other social factors, namely cultural capital, that participants used to describe their CS experiences.

The Cultural Capital of CS

Some of the most prevalent explanations for being involved in CS practices were related to the participant's access to economic and educational resources. For instance, HelenBedd, a White/Caucasian woman, explained how she had become involved in a working-class CS community:

> The way I got into it was through my friend's partner who is also very working class, so these were working class dykes. And so I think they felt comfortable…

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[22] As discussed by Perez, "The closet metaphor spatially and temporally suggests access to privacy not collectively experienced by all sexual minorities. The privacy this metaphor takes for granted requires specific economic, cultural, and familial circumstances. Likewise, the 'coming out' metaphor suggests a kind of mobility not universally available" (2005: 177). Thus, "coming out" requires capital.

and I came from a working class background so I was fine… they were an exception; by and large it is white, by and large it is educated, by and large it is middle class.

Although alternative communities such as the one described by HelenBedd apparently do exist, they are few and far between. And, even when they are available, they may not be apparent to individuals who are unaware of the CS option in comparison to normative heterosexual sex. In fact, many participants explained that the first time they had encountered consensual sadomasochism was when they had gone to college and either took a sexualities or similar course or met others who were "in the know" about CS.

Still, others explained the under-representation of ethnic minorities in CS as an economic factor. Many participants suggested that the lack of racial/ethnic minorities in their own communities was related to the expense of maintaining a CS habit. Matt and Alan, two White/Caucasian men explain:

I don't see a whole lot of [racial] minorities at the clubs. I do, I see a few but, yeah, I would say the majority are middle- and upper-class. I know people who are not—hovering just above the poverty line—who do it too, you know. It tends to be, it is kind of an expensive habit, almost…the clothes are very expensive, paying 15 dollars to get in a club every week can get pricey, so it does require some sort of financial stability.

I don't know what the percentage is, but I could very easily understand where it would be a much higher percentage of upper-middle class, because it is costly. It is costly to do, especially if you are playing with leathers, and you are playing with wrist restrains, and all those kinds things. That stuff gets expensive really quick… A[n] electric wand, $300. Excuse me; you can't do that on minimum wage jobs. So you can go to down depot, Home Depot, and you can make all kinds of toys. But some of them you can't, you know.

Not only did participants explain financial resources as an essential aspect of CS play, but they also explained that their own play took quite a bit of time out of their schedules, as did their practice training for the play—a scenario specific to dominants who gain social status from their names as skilled players. For example, one of the youngest interviewees, Avello, a

White/Caucasian man, mentioned that he had been practicing Shibari (an intricate form of

Japanese art bondage) for several years, which took up much of his time. Also, one of the oldest

and most "experienced" interviewees, Grey, a White/Caucasian man, explained the complexities

of master/slave relationships, suggesting that they involve time and effort beyond the single play

scene:

> To get to that level of master/slave interaction it takes a while. You've gotta have been around for a while, and be exposed to it and really know what it is, and really, in fact, this is your life, this is who you are inside…When someone identifies with the master/slave community they are a master all the time; whatever they are doing they are doing as a master, whether they have a slave at that time or not.

Given this information about the time and resources that are involved in CS play, I was curious

about how much time participants spent dedicated to CS play. The statistical data revealed that,

on average, interviewees, regardless of race/ethnicity, practiced CS regularly for the past 10.07

years (SD = 9.89). In addition, 40.2% (n = 104) of the participants mentioned that they had

participated in CS 13 or more times in the past year, yet they were not happy with the amount

because it was "a bit too little."

DISCUSSION

Interestingly, the White/Caucasian participants explained the lack of racial/ethnic

minorities within their own CS communities and/or interactions as resulting from a lack of

monetary resources. Statistical analysis of household income and race/ethnicity, however,

showed no significant relationship ($r = .092, n = 251, p = .145$), and statistical analysis of

education and race/ethnicity showed no significant relationship ($r = .005, n = 253, p = .936$).

The more traditional explanations of cultural and social capital that focus only on material goods

and resources, then, do not capture the complexities of how race and class can be utilized as

forms of capital. Acknowledging these forms of capital is particularly important in CS relationships and communities where it is said that SM roles do not assign "privileges based on race, gender, and social class" (Califia 1994: 169). Although CS roles may not be associated with race, gender, and social class privileges, it is important to note that these privileges exist outside of CS play and can therefore be reinforced within CS play. As one bi-racial participant mentioned, he constantly experienced implicit and explicit eroticization as an ethnic minority due to his "contrasting skin color." Other ethnic minorities that have posted blogs about CS, in addition, have mentioned that because CS requires both social (status) and cultural capital (economic and informational resources), it is a privilege in and of itself.

What could be happening with the CS participants' discourses around social and cultural capital, although in a smaller context, is similar to what Puar (2007) explains as "homonationalism" in which insider/outsider categorizations are maintained despite the insider's claims of acceptance and inclusion. She explains that in the process of claiming national modernity, the Western World (e.g., the "insiders") has claimed homosexuality as a sign of liberalism and whiteness and by default have relegated the East and U.S. ethnic minorities to the "outsider" status as queers (in the sense of being deviant and pathological), and therefore terrorists. Similarly, it appears that CS participation has been designated as a sign of liberalism and whiteness. Indeed, several participants explained that ethnic minorities were less likely to participate in CS because of their conservative religious backgrounds and family upbringings although it is more likely that CS participation is far more complex than this explanation. In fact, as was revealed in the previous data chapters, experiences with gender, sexual orientation, CS roles, and even sexual objectification *are* extremely complex. It therefore makes sense that experiences with race, ethnicity, and class would also be complex; the discourses surrounding

race, ethnicity, and class within the CS community serve as an excellent reminder of the complexities of the CS experience.

CONCLUSION

None of the quantitative data analyses suggest any relationship exists between race/ethnicity and social or cultural capital. Nonetheless, consensual sadomasochists perceive their experiences with race, ethnicity, and class to be closely related to social and cultural capital. Participants explained that individuals gain status by being associated with a CS community, which involves developing a "great name," networking with other consensual sadomasochists, and "coming out" to spouses, family, friends, and co-workers about their CS play—a privilege that not all individuals can afford, due to their ties to traditional families and communities. In addition, participants perceived the overwhelming presence of Whites/Caucasians within CS spaces as a result of economic resources and time that allow CS participants to attend CS clubs/events as well as purchase expensive play toys. Most participants also explained that their involvement in CS was a result of their formal education that challenged their own beliefs about traditional relationships and sexual practices; it was because of this education that they ventured into CS play. Still others explained that CS is a privilege not afforded all individuals, and consequently those who are already involved in CS are mostly privileged Whites/Caucasians and the occasional privileged ethnic minority. Finally, although not mentioned by my participants, it seems plausible that if CS is a privilege not afforded all—especially ethnic minorities and those of lower socio-economic status—then it is also not deemed appropriate for all.

Earlier I discussed Puar's (2007) claim that liberalism and nationalism is a privilege given the West, and specifically Whites/Caucasians in the West. Similarly, consensual

sadomasochism is a privilege held by Whites/Caucasians in the West. Indeed, Sheela (2008) found that ethnic minorities in Singapore identified CS as a status marker (social capital) specifically because they thought of it as Western practice, even though CS is quite popular in Japan. In this study, CS is a status marker because of its association with liberalism as well as its ability to create and reinforce privileged in-groups and underprivileged out-groups associated with social and cultural capital. To explain CS as a privileged practice, however, does not mean that it is entirely practiced by privileged individuals. In fact, there are many ethnic minorities, sexual minorities, and individuals of lower socio-economic status that practice CS. It is likely, however, that these individuals practice in private spaces rather than public spaces due to the social and cultural capital involved with public play.

Moreover, several blogs have been posted on fetlife.com by ethnic minorities, about the lack of ethnic minorities in public scenes; many individuals have mentioned that because the public scene is "so white," they are uncomfortable participating because of the "nonconsensual exotification" occurring and have therefore either remained playing in private or have created subgroups within the larger community.[23] In the words of Emma Perez, these latter individuals have sought "un sitio y una lengua," (as cited in Danielson 2009) or a space and language of their own where they feel comfortable playing with dominance and submission and where they can build a CS community that is sensitive to their raced and classed positionalities.

This chapter, like the previous two data chapters, suggests that the CS environment has been claimed as a queer space where individuals go to feel acceptance and pleasure. However, unlike the previous two data chapters, this chapter reveals that CS communities and participants

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[23] At fetlife.com, one of the largest social networking sights for CS participants, out of 20,833 total groups, there are fewer than 20 "people of color" groups and a handful of groups that cater to white dominants that love ethnic minority submissives.

have yet to address race, ethnicity, and class as a goal for inclusion. Although some CS groups

do exist that also welcome queer, ethnic minorities, and no participants perceived their CS

communities to be discriminatory, the discourses around race, ethnicity, and class revealed that

part of the privilege of being involved in consensual sadomasochistic communities was in

explaining the racial differences as a class-based rather than race-based phenomenon. In other

words, White/Caucasian consensual sadomasochists' discourses circulated around social and

cultural capital as an explanation for the lack of minorities in their communities. Meanwhile, the

ethnic minorities' discourses involved things such as discrimination and discomfort. Why the

discrepancy? Perhaps the "wage of whiteness" was in not having to challenge the racial

privileges of kink. Therefore, there are both advantages and disadvantages to consensual

sadomasochism in how much it contributes to queerity; CS directly challenges heteronormativity

but still reinforces race, ethnicity, and class divisions.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS: THE SOCIOLOGY OF CONSENSUAL SADOMASOCHISM

Sociological research of bodies has existed in the West since the early 19th century when Sociology first evolved as a field and practice. For instance, Marx specifically challenged the Cartesian mind/body dualism when he explained the bodily consequences of capitalism, while Weber examined the ways in which the protestant ethic would deny the body of pleasures (Howson 2005). Despite this early sociological research into bodies and pleasures, sociological research specific to embodiment did not emerge until the late 20th century, well after psychologists, philosophers, sexologists, and feminists had already begun to grapple with research in this field. Once this occurred, however, an important aspect of embodiment was overlooked—sexuality. Although sociologists have effectively incorporated sexual orientation into their surveys and analyses, they have largely left the pleasures of sex and sexuality for other scholars, namely feminists and queer theorists, to explore. More over, very few, if any, social scholars have ventured to study "alternative" sexualities. Parker (2008) explained, that even within sex research, the sex has been left out and researchers must be attentive to this. He pushes for "put[ting] the sex back in sex research and to pay renewed attention to the complex choreography of bodies, caresses and sensations that our own work may ironically have left aside in our rush to legitimacy and professional recognition" (10). Likewise, I conducted this research, in order to put bodies and pleasures back into sociological research.

One of the main reasons scholars have explained their leaving sexuality, bodies, and pleasures out of social research is that, as alluded to by Parker, these can be risky topics, especially when combined. As was mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, consensual

sadomasochists have, since at least Freud, been pathologized and deemed morally inept and psychologically ill. So, when scholars have examined consensual sadomasochists in the past, they have historically been psychologists, psychoanalysts, and even criminologists who are seeking to understand the pathology of CS; again, the belief is that sadomasochistic activities cannot involve love and thus are not socially acceptable forms of sexual pleasure (White 2006; also see Rubin 1984). These ideas about consensual sadomasochism, however, have begun to change within Western cultures. One only need look as far as popular media to see an image of a dominatrix selling product or performing in a movie. However, as is suggested by Weiss (2006), even these images only allow for the normalization, rather than acceptance, of CS in society. Moreover, CS acts as a demarcation between the normal and the abnormal because the representations of consensual sadomasochism allow people to "flirt with danger" while maintaining their privilege as "normal" (105). Sociologically, these demarcations are important to understand from both the inside and outsider perspective, as they are likely to differ in significant and important ways.

This dissertation was an attempt to understand difference from within. In other words, I wanted to know about consensual sadomasochists'—a group that has been relegated to the outsider status by larger society—experiences of difference within this subculture. Further, I wanted to know how these individuals experienced their bodies within this context. Much of the extant research of consensual sadomasochists and the CS community has attempted, since at least the 1980s, to depathologize consensual sadomasochism (e.g., Gosselin and Wilson 1980; Taylor and Ussher 2001; Richters et al. 2008; Weinberg, 2006). Rather than also try and depathologize CS, I wanted to know how participants described and experienced their own differences within this community. Importantly, experiences of difference have quite a lot to say

about: the individuals within the subculture, the subculture itself, and the larger culture from which the individuals come. For instance, in his reading of Young's (2005) study of gendered bodies, Howson (2005: 30) claims that Crossley sees the body as "gendered through classificatory processes that render particular bodily parts as symbolic markers of social difference." As a result of this classification, bodies are felt and experienced as inherently different, and individuals thus learn to embody this difference. Given that the participants in this study also live in a gendered, sexed, raced, and classed culture, it seems remarkable that their experiences within the CS subculture have also allowed them to challenge some of these classifications.

In the next section, I summarize the results of Chapters 3 through 5, which allow for the conclusion I made above, namely that the CS experience allows for participants to challenge heteronormativity within a queer environment. I explain the ways in which participants effectively utilized their differences through queer performances, role fluidities, and sexual objectification within the CS context—which is also consensual and negotiated—to "offer the minoritarian subject a space to situate itself in history and thus seize social agency" (Muñoz 1999: i). However, I also explain the contradictions within this context in which racial/ethnic and lower-class minorities have been excluded from certain CS communities to the extent that these communities require social and cultural capital to participate. Next, I discuss the theoretical contributions that this study makes, as well as the benefits of using a mixed-methods design. This chapter ends with a review of the study limitations and recommendations for future research.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Chapter 3 specifically focused on participants' CS role identities, CS role preferences, and CS role fluidities. I hypothesized that among consensual sadomasochists, traditional gender roles in relation to CS role identities (i.e., women as submissives and men as dominants) would be less predominant among non-heterosexuals than heterosexuals. This hypothesis came from the extant research finding that non-heterosexual consensual sadomasochists differ significantly from heterosexual consensual sadomasochists in terms of the roles they play, the frequency of play, and the fluidity of their roles (Hale 1997; Mosher, Levitt, and Manley 2006; Nordling et al. 2006; Sandnabba, Santilla, and Nordling 1999). Indeed, non-heterosexuals, and specifically those who self-identified as having "other" sexual orientations (i.e., lesbians, gays, queers, pansexuals, and others) had higher role fluidity scores, meaning that they were more likely to switch roles than bisexual and heterosexual individuals. In addition, they were more likely than all others to self-identify as Switch versus SSBM, even when controlling for age and education levels.

The quantitative data was also supplemented by interview data, which suggested the link between Switch identities/roles had quite a bit to do with "queer" self-identification. Considering Warner's (1993: xx) explanation of queer as, "a political form of embodiment that is defined as noise or interference in the disembodying frame of citizenship," Switches also represented the proverbial "noise in the system" (Wilchins 2004) because they refused to be categorized as dominant or submissive. Part of the contradiction of this refusal, however, is that in order to attract play partners, Switches must at a certain point choose a role. However, self-identifying as a submissive or a dominant in the CS context does not necessarily mean that the individual actually has less or more power, respectively; rather, they perform the role that gives

them the most pleasure. It is here that consensual sadomasochists challenge heteronormativity, even when they play normative gender roles, because they seek sexual pleasure outside of normative sexual relations or outside the "charmed circle"—sex that is non-genital, non-procreative, outside of marriage, that is sometimes in the public and sometimes alone or in groups (Rubin 1984).

The next data chapter, Chapter 4, also examines the ways in which participants experience difference within the CS context. More specific to their embodiment, however, this chapter focuses on participants' experiences with sexual objectification. Sexual objectification in CS is something that has been debated since at least the 1980s when feminist groups came out against sadomasochism because they perceived it to reinforce patriarchal norms in which men dominate women and women consent to this domination because they have eroticized patriarchy (e.g., Hopkins 1994; MacKinnon 1997; Mansfield 1997; Saxe 1992). In response to this critique Califia (1994), Connell (2002), and Nussbaum (1995) explained that sexual objectification for consensual sadomasochists meant empowerment, sexual pleasure, and autonomy rather than the negative things Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) theorized—self-surveillance and body-shame.

In Chapter 4, I tested the participants' reported levels of self-objectification, self-surveillance, body-shame, and body (dis)satisfaction. In congruence with Chapter 3, the data revealed that particularly for those who self-identify as non-heterosexual, there is a negative correlation between self-objectification and self-surveillance, as well as self-objectification and body-shame. The contradiction within this data, however, is that the difference in body-shame means between heterosexual, bisexual, and "others" are significant, such that both heterosexual and "other" individuals appear to have similar levels of body-shame, which are quite a bit lower than bisexuals' reported levels. Taking this information in combination with the interviewees

discourses around feminism and queerity suggested that the CS environment (which allows for greater variability in body shapes, sizes, and even genitalia—think Mz. Mira) offers those who have experienced marginality within their lives, because of their bodies, a space to feel accepted and a space to re-imagine their bodies as objects of pleasure; yet, not all participants escape from heterosexist beauty ideals, as is evidenced by the bisexual participants' body-shame means. In addition, not all participants seem to have an equal opportunity to participate in this subculture that allows for bodily acceptance.

In an examination of the discourses around race, ethnicity, and class, in Chapter 5, I found that participants perceived the under-representation of minorities within their CS communities is a consequence of the social and cultural capital required to participate in consensual sadomasochism, especially in public venues (e.g., public dungeons, clubs, and/or events). Moreover, the White/Caucasian participants explained that gaining social capital (i.e., the status as a safe and skilled player) required networking with other CS participants and also being able to "come out" as kinky to friends, family, co-workers, and/or partners. The White/Caucasian participants also suggested that cultural capital was often more important to their CS play because they required educational and economic resources to continue participating in consensual sadomasochism in public.

Some participants described how they first learned about CS as an alternative to heteronormative sex from college courses and texts. Others explained that once they learned about CS, their participation in it required quite a bit of money and free time. These discourses of social and cultural capital, as explained by Lipsitz (1998) and Roediger (1991), are the wages of whiteness, which allow CS participants to explain the differences between their own participation in CS and the participation of minorities in CS as class based, rather than race

based. This last dissertation chapter serves as a reminder that although queerity allows for consensual sadomasochists to re-imagine some very deep-seated heteronormative dichotomies and practices (i.e., dominance/submission and sexual objectification), it is still a project that is "in the works," so to speak. Warner (1993: xvii) explains, "Often the disparity between racial and sexual imperatives can be registered as an unresolved dissonance." This disparity also appears within the CS context in which participants have been given the space for queer performances, although these spaces are still marked as the arena of the "unnamed."

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Having utilized both a mixed-methods and a mixed-theoretical approach for this study proved quite useful. As I mentioned in the introduction, a historicization of experience, and especially embodied experience required that I combine feminist, queer, and sociological theories. In combination, these theoretical frameworks helped explain the quantitative and qualitative data to the extent that these frameworks have historically been useful for explaining experiences of difference. For instance, Butler (1993; 2004) addressed gender and sex differences within her works, explaining that sexual difference is often thought of as coming from the flesh/material when in actuality it comes from discourse. Sexual difference, thus, "is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs" (Butler 1993a: 1). In other words, sex produces intelligible bodies and unintelligible bodies that do not adhere to the norms of society, which Butler seeks to challenge in many of her works on performativity.

In her discussions of performativity and performance, Butler suggested that through transgressive performances, individuals destabilize gender and sex categories. Similarly, Muñoz (1999: i) explained that queer performances allow for queer audiences to "imagine a world where

queer lives, politics, and possibilities are representable in their complexity." However, Butler cautions, "any attempt at subversion is potentially recuperable" (Butler 1993b: np). Within this study, I suggested that some consensual sadomasochists purposefully seek to challenge both gender and sex categories in their performances of dominance and submission. It was also clear that some participants were not purposefully working towards creating a queer space; rather, they sought pleasure and/or acceptance. However, my final conclusion in relation to CS performances was that even those who do not identify as queer and who seek experiences that do not directly challenge normative sex and gender relations participate in an activity that to a certain extent challenges heteronormativity in that consensual sadomasochism exists as a practice located outside of normative sexual experience. The practice, in and of itself, is queer.

As a queer practice, consensual sadomasochism should resist the normal (Warner 1993), which seems to be the case in terms of the roles participants take as well as sexual objectification. Had consensual sadomasochists not fetishized negotiated and consensual objectification, it is likely that participants would have experienced the negative consequences of sexual objectification, as proposed by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997). It was therefore particularly important that I examine self-objectification theory from a feminist and queer framework to understand the limits of this theory. These frameworks allowed for a reconsideration of sexual objectification and its consequences, given the CS context that differs in a number of different ways from other sexually objectifying environments. For instance, and as elaborated upon in Chapter 4, women within the CS context have some control over the amount of objectification that occurs within their play scenes and also feel empowered by the sexualized clothing they wear in these environments (Califia 1994).

Even with these understandings of consensual sadomasochists' embodied experiences with gender, sexual orientation, and sexuality, this study would have been incomplete without an investigation of race, ethnicity, and class. Unfortunately, there were so few racial/ethnic minorities within the quantitative sample in this study, that statistical analyses proved problematic. Luckily, however, having utilized a mixed-methods approach to understanding consensual sadomasochists' experiences of difference, I was able to conduct a discourse analysis of the interviewees' perceptions of minority under-representations within their communities. Because the participants' discourses involved capital, sociological theories of capital were particularly important here. Interestingly, Bourdieu's (1986) theories of capital have been utilized for discussions of class relations but few, if any, have also examined the ways in which his theories relate to those discussed by Roediger (1991) and Lipsitz (1998) in their discussions of the wages of whiteness. This study not only brought these theories together, but it also examined the ways in which race, ethnicity, and class intersect with sexuality.

The incorporation of the three theoretical frameworks from feminists, queer theorists, and sociologists mentioned above meant that at times the data analyses in this dissertation were complex. However, this dissertation reveals the similarities between these frameworks, allowing for a multifaceted examination of sexuality, and especially "alternative" sexualities that are themselves complex. Although there is still much research to be done in the area of alternative sexualities, as is noted in the next section, there are several things that feminist, queer, and sociological scholars can learn from the embodied experiences of consensual sadomasochists. More specifically, feminist scholars can work with queer theories to understand performances that work to de-center normative gender and sex relations, such as consensual sadomasochism. In addition, sociological scholars must begin to acknowledge the contributions sexuality studies

make towards the sociology of bodies and embodied difference. These studies suggest that bodies continue to be regulated and controlled due to categorizations of difference related to gender, sex, race/ethnicity, and class, yet scholars have under-theorized and under-researched embodied difference related to these categorizations.

LIMITATIONS

In this section, I address the limitations of this study and make recommendations for future research in the area of "alternative" sexualities and the sociology of bodies. Because each data chapter focused on different characteristics of the total sample, I address the limitations of each chapter separately. Overall, however, I would like to comment on the general limitations of this study's methodology. The on-line survey was taken by 259 individuals and completed by 130 individuals. Although the completion rate was higher than expected, the survey was too long and therefore resulted in about half of the sample dropping out. In their own sexuality study, Ross et al. (2003) found that most dropouts for on-line surveys on sexuality occurs (on a 75 question survey) at item 25 for men and 49 for women. They explain, "there is a high and early dropout rate for sexuality-related questionnaires" (401). However, in this study, most of the participants completed the first two survey sections (demographics and CS experiences) and dropped out for the questions relating to their bodies. So, these participants answered 45 questions, indicating that perhaps the drop-out rate was related to their apprehensions with answering questions about their bodies rather than their characteristics, as suggested by Ross et al. Future research in self-objectification among "alternative" sexualities participants should be aware of this hypothesis when creating their surveys.

In addition, a more random sample of participants (for the survey and interviews) would likely change the results of this study and even allow for generalizations that are simply not possible in this dissertation. The sample was largely collected from two CS networking websites on the Internet and therefore does not account for those individuals that do not have access to the Internet or that do not participate in these networking sites. It would thus be important to extend this study, perhaps by surveying individuals that play in private or that play in sex/gender specific public spaces (e.g., leathermen bars/dungeons, transgender CS clubs, or women only play spaces). In addition, an over-sampling of these individuals would likely be necessary for further understanding men's queer performances; in this study, there were so few men that self-identified as non-heterosexual that most of the results based on non-heterosexual orientations were related to women only. Also related to this limitation is the fact that I over-simplified sex and gender categories by re-categorizing transgender folks as either men or women. One of the problems with utilizing quantitative data is that researchers are often required to place participants in categories that are exclusionary; because I wanted to include the transgender folks, and since their group size was too small for individual analyses, my re-categorization of them (i.e., transgender male to female became "woman" and transgender female to male became "man") re-enforced sex and gender binaries. This limitation is particularly problematic since I argued in Chapter 3 that gender and sexual orientation make a significant difference for CS role performances.

Also in Chapter 3, I developed a new scale, "role fluidity." Although it had a high Cronbach's Alpha and Kruder-Richardson Reliability Coefficient, further testing of this variable should be conducted. I also realized after I had conducted analyses of this variable that re-coding the variable as dichotomous was problematic in that those individuals who selected

"Neutral" received zero points for this answer. I would therefore recommend that this variable be recoded so that the original five-point Likert Scale reflects all of the respondents' choices (i.e., "Strongly disagree" = 1, "Disagree" = 2, "Neutral" = 3, etc.). Then the participants' scores could be added for each of the five questions and divided by 5 to obtain the role-fluidity score for each participant in which a "0" = no role-fluidity and a "5" = high role-fluidity. Also related to measurements within this study, the participants in Chapter 4 would have greatly benefited from a comparison group. As was mentioned in the discussion section of this chapter, CS participants who play in public settings versus private settings would likely have different experiences with self-objectification and would therefore be important comparison groups for self-objectification measures among consensual sadomasochists.

Finally, the overriding concern that I had with this study was the lack of racial/ethnic minorities in my sample, as is evident from Chapter 5. An over-sampling of these individuals would have likely changed the results of both Chapters 4 and 5. Particular to Chapter 4, racial/ethnic minorities have been shown to have different experiences with self-objectification (Breitkopf and Littleton 2007; Harrison and Fredrickson 2003; Moradi and Huang 2008) than Whites/Caucasians. Because the sample in this study was about 90% White/Caucasian, I mostly captured the sexual objectification experienced by these folks. In addition, I largely had to rely on the discourses of difference given by White/Caucasian participants in Chapter 5. While these discourses helped in the critique of embodied difference, it also helped reinforce these differences, particularly not having the voice of the "other" represented in these discourses. Future research of CS should, therefore, examine the discourses of ethnic minorities' CS experiences to determine whether social and cultural capital is the focus of difference or rather

race and ethnicity. This research would likely reveal the dissonances between race and sexuality described by Warner (1993).

Despite these limitations, this study greatly contributes to feminist, queer, and sociological understandings of consensual sadomasochism as a performance, consensual sadomasochists as performers, and CS as a community. In addition, it sheds some light on the ways in which individuals actively seek to transform institutions, such as gender and sexuality, by re-imagining their bodies as objects of pleasure and subjects of dominance and submission. Finally, it opens the door for an examination of the ways in which consensual sadomasochists can further work towards challenging institutions such as race, ethnicity, and class.

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APPENDIX A

Table 2.1
Sample Demographics for Subsamples (Women and Men) and for Total Sample (N =259)

Characteristic	Women % (n)	Men % (n)	Total (Sample) % (n)
Sexual Orientation	n = 122	n = 116	N = 259
Heterosexual	31.2% (38)	75.0% (87)	48.3% (125)
Bisexual	31.2% (38)	10.3% (12)	19.3% (50)
Other	37.7% (46)	14.7% (17)	24.3% (63)
Race/Ethnicity	n = 133	n = 121	
White	87.2% (116)	92.6% (112)	88.0% (228)
Racial/Ethnic Minority	12.8% (17)	7.4% (9)	10.0% (26)
Hispanic*	3.9% (5)	5.3% (6)	4.2% (11)
Age	n = 133	n = 122	
18 – 24	36.1% (48)	17.2% (21)	26.6% (69)
25 – 34	26.3% (35)	18.9% (23)	22.4% (58)
35 – 44	21.1% (28)	26.2% (32)	23.2% (60)
45 – 54	15.0% (20)	22.1% (27)	18.2% (47)
55 – 64	1.5% (2)	15.6% (19)	8.1% (21)
Education	n = 132	n = 121	
College degree	47.7% (63)	62.8% (76)	53.7% (139)
Some college, no degree	43.2% (57)	27.3% (33)	34.8% (90)
High school diploma/GED	7.6% (10)	8.3% (10)	7.7% (20)
Some high school	1.5% (2)	1.5% (2)	1.5% (4)

* Hispanic origin is based on a sample of 242 individuals, 128 women and 114 men.

Table 2.2
Interviewee Demographics (N = 25)

Pseudonym	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Age	Race/Ethnicity
Jennifer	Woman	Bisexual	35 – 44	White/Caucasian
Sylvia	Woman	Bisexual	35 – 44	White/Caucasian
Nicki	Woman	Open-Option	18 – 24	White/Caucasian
Caryl	Woman	Pansexual	45 – 54	White/Caucasian
Gayla	Woman	Pansexual	25 – 34	Chicana
Apricating	Woman	Queer	18 – 24	Asian Australian
HelenBedd	Woman	Queer	35 – 44	White/Caucasian
Mikki	Woman	Queer	25 – 34	White/Caucasian
Mz Mira	Gender Queer Transwoman	Queer	18 – 24	White/Caucasian
Jack Noir	Man	95% straight	55 – 64	White/Caucasian
Grey	Man	Bisexual	55 – 64	White/Caucasian
Matt	Man	Heteroflexible	18 – 24	White/Caucasian
Chris	Man	Heterosexual	*	White/Caucasian
Alan	Man	Heterosexual	45 – 54	White/Caucasian
Avello	Man	Heterosexual	25 – 34	White/Caucasian
Eternal Student	Man	Heterosexual	18 – 24	White/Caucasian
Jason	Man	Heterosexual	25 – 34	White/Caucasian
EK	Man	Heterosexual	25 – 34	Biracial, Black/White
Axedrez	Man	Heterosexual	45 – 54	White/Caucasian French
David	Man	Heterosexual	45 – 54	White/Caucasian
Bskyler	Man	Heterosexual	*	White/Caucasian
Lindsey in Bonds	Man	Heterosexual	35 – 44	White/Caucasian
Jake the Switch	Man	Heterosexual	*	White/Caucasian
Rainman	Man	Heterosexual	35 – 44	White/Caucasian
Leance	Man	Kinky	35 – 44	White/Caucasian

* Indicates that the participant did not specify.

Table 3.1
Sample Demographics by Gender

Characteristic	Women % (n)	Men % (n)	Total % (n)
Sexual Orientation	(n = 97)	(n = 91)	(N = 188)
Heterosexual	26.8% (26)	76.9% (70)	51.1% (96)
Bisexual	30.9% (30)	9.9% (9)	20.7% (39)
Other	42.3% (42)	13.2% (12)	28.2% (54)
Race			
White	86.6% (84)	92.2% (83)	89.3% (167)
Non-white	13.4% (13)	7.8% (7)	10.7% (20)
Ethnicity			
Non-Hispanic	96.8% (91)	94.2% (81)	95.6% (172)
Hispanic	3.2% (3)	5.8% (5)	4.4% (8)
Formal Education			
College degree	49.0% (47)	65.9% (60)	57.2% (107)
No degree	51.0% (49)	34.1% (31)	42.8% (80)
Age			
18 to 24	33.3% (32)	14.3% (13)	24.1% (45)
25 to 34	27.1% (26)	18.7% (17)	23.0% (43)
35 to 44	21.9% (21)	28.6% (26)	25.3% (47)
45 to 54	15.6% (15)	23.1% (21)	19.3% (36)
55 to 64	2.1% (2)	15.4% (14)	8.6% (16)

Note. One man was "unspecified" for race while five men and three women were "unspecified" for ethnicity. Two women were "unspecified" for either education or age.

Table 3.2

Probability Distributions of CS Role Identity and Role Preference by Gender and Sexual Orientation

Characteristic	CS Role Identity (N = 188)			CS Role Preference (N = 188)		
	SSBM	DMTS	Switch	Always Sub	Always Dom	Switch
Gender	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)	% (n)
Woman	75.3 (61)	18.0 (11)	54.4 (25)	73.2 (41)	16.3 (7)	55.1 (49)
Man	24.7 (20)	82.0 (50)	45.7 (21)	26.8 (15)	83.7 (36)	44.9 (40)
	(x^2 = 45.891, p ≤ .001)			(x^2 = 32.381, p ≤ .001)		
Sexual Orientation						
Heterosexual	39.5 (32)	82.0 (50)	30.4 (14)	48.2 (27)	86.1 (37)	36.0 (32)
Bisexual	30.9 (25)	6.6 (4)	21.7 (10)	26.8 (15)	7.0 (3)	23.6 (21)
Other	29.6 (24)	11.5 (7)	47.8 (22)	25.0 (14)	7.0 (3)	40.5 (36)
	(x^2 = 39.696, p ≤ .001)			(x^2 = 31.447, p ≤ .001)		

Table 3.3

Relative Risk Ratios of CS Role Identities (N = 186) by Gender and Sexual Orientation

Characteristic	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	DMTS v SSBM	Switch v SSBM	DMTS v SSBM	Switch v SSBM	DMTS v SSBM	Switch v SSBM
Constants						
Degree	1.06	1.24	1.15	1.37	1.20	1.72
Age [55-64]						
18-24	0.70	1.52	0.79	1.47	1.08	0.93
25-34	0.62	1.75	0.57	1.93	0.66	1.49
35-44	1.50	1.44	1.32	1.52	1.53	1.01
45-54	2.12	1.26	1.96	1.44	1.88	1.09
Gender [Man]						
Woman	0.08***	0.37*	0.11***	0.23**	0.11***	0.25**
Sexual Orientation [Heterosexual]						
Bisexual			0.25*	1.59	0.32	1.23
Other			0.55	3.98**	0.59	3.52*
Role Fluidity					0.71	3.00***
Statistics	ll = -170.73 x² (12) = 57.27		ll = -161.46 x² (16) = 75.81		ll = -144.83 x² (18) = 109.06	

Note. The two women who were "unspecified" for education and age are missing from this analysis.

* Significant at p < .05 level.

** Significant at p < .01 level.

*** Significant at p < .001 level.

Table 3.4

Relative Risk Ratios of CS Role Preferences (N = 186) by Gender and Sexual Orientation

Characteristic	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Dom v Sub	Switch v Sub	Dom v Sub	Switch v Sub	Dom v Sub	Switch v Sub
Constants						
Degree	0.70	1.19	0.76	1.36	0.79	1.81
Age [55-64]						
18-24	1.35	5.35*	1.51	5.68*	2.77	4.60
25-34	1.46	2.71	1.28	2.81	1.90	2.12
35-44	4.07	3.60	3.58	3.98	5.50	2.82
45-54	4.70	2.78	4.32	3.29	4.86	3.39
Gender [Man]						
Woman	0.06***	0.35*	0.09***	0.20**	0.08***	0.21**
Sexual Orientation [Heterosexual]						
Bisexual			0.44	2.16	0.71	2.00
Other			0.50	3.92**	0.56	3.86
Role Fluidity					0.48*	3.48***
Statistics	ll = -171.55 x^2 (12) = 48.61		ll = -163.01 x^2 (16) = 65.68		ll = -129.06 x^2 (18) = 133.57	

Note. The two women who were "unspecified" for education and age are missing from this analysis.

* Significant at p < .05 level.

** Significant at p < .01 level.

*** Significant at p < .001 level.

Table 3.5

Differences in Role Fluidity Means by Gender, Sexual Orientation, CS Role Identity, and CS Role Preference (N=188)

Characteristics	Mean Role Fluidity Score	Difference in Means
Gender [Woman]	2.98	
Man	2.60	0.38
	t (186) = -2.41, p ≤ 0.05	
Sexual Orientation [Other]	3.15	
Bisexual	3.07	0.08
Heterosexual	2.49	0.66
	F = 8.20, p ≤ 0.001	
CS Role Identity [Switch/Versatile]	3.59	
SSBM	2.79	0.52
DMTS	2.21	1.38
	F = 26.62, p ≤ 0.001	
CS Role Preference [Switch]	3.47	
Submissive	2.52	0.95
Dominant	1.78	1.69
	F = 61.33, p ≤ 0.001	

Table 4.1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Difference in Means for Self-Objectification, Self-Surveillance,
Body-Shame, and Body-(Dis)satisfaction by Gender and Sexual Orientation

Variable	Subsample	Mean	SD	Range
Self-Objectification	Women	5.25	17.62	-28 – 36
	Men	2.89	19.57	-36 – 36
T-test (*df*), significance		t (*117*) = -0.693, p ≤ 0.490		
	Heterosexual	4.96	18.62	-36 – 36
	Bisexual	-1.20	18.23	-36 – 36
	Other	7.09	17.61	-28 – 36
F-test (*df*), significance		F (*2, 107*) = 0.121, p ≤ 0.211		
Self-Surveillance	Women	3.08	0.84	1.4 – 5.0
	Men	2.65	0.74	1.1 – 4.0
T-test (*df*), significance		t (*117*) = -2.936, p ≤ 0.004		
	Heterosexual	2.74	0.69	1.1 – 4.1
	Bisexual	3.15	1.01	1.4 – 5.0
	Other	3.01	0.76	1.4 – 4.6
F-test (*df*), significance		F (*2, 107*) = 4.793, p ≤ 0.090		
Body-Shame	Women	2.32	0.91	0.6 – 4.5
	Men	2.21	0.71	0.8 – 3.8
T-test (*df*), significance		t (*117*) = -0.709, p ≤ 0.480		
	Heterosexual	2.14	0.72	0.8 – 3.4
	Bisexual	2.81	0.97	1.0 – 4.9
	Other	2.25	0.78	1.1 – 4.1
F-test (*df*), significance		F (*2, 107*) = 1.861, p ≤ 0.007		
BASS	Women	3.49	0.61	1.7 – 4.6
	Men	3.42	0.58	2.3 – 5.0
T-test (*df*), significance		t (*117*) = -0.613, p ≤ 0.541		
	Heterosexual	3.49	0.57	2.4 – 5.0
	Bisexual	3.41	0.70	1.4 – 4.4
	Other	3.38	0.61	2.3 – 4.4
F-test (*df*), significance		F (*2, 107*) = 0.189, p ≤ 0.737		
AES	Women	3.50	0.77	1.0 – 5.0
	Men	3.31	0.76	1.0 – 5.0
T-test (*df*), significance		t (*117*) = -1.337, p ≤ 0.184		
	Heterosexual	3.37	0.81	1.0 – 5.0
	Bisexual	3.35	0.90	1.0 – 5.0
	Other	3.47	0.69	1.7 – 4.8
F-test (*df*), significance		F (*2, 107*) = 1.083, p ≤ 0.886		

Table 4.2

Correlations Between Self-Objectification, Self-Surveillance, Body-Shame, Body (Dis)satisfaction (BASS and AES), Gender, CS Identity, and Age for Heterosexual and Non-heterosexual Participants

	SO	SS	BS	BASS	AES	Woman	SSBM	DMTS	Switch	Age
SO	---	-0.24*	-0.33**	0.19	0.32**	0.19	0.25*	0.20	0.26*	-0.09
SS	-0.08	---	0.67***	-0.39***	-0.25*	0.17	-0.19	-0.24*	-0.17	-0.28*
BS	0.04	0.20	---	-0.50***	-0.52***	-0.00	-0.15	-0.20	-0.21	-0.09
BASS	0.19	-0.25*	-0.50***	---	0.72***	0.09	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.05
AES	0.18	-0.16	-0.52***	0.85***	---	0.11	0.13	0.13	0.17	-0.05
Woman	0.10	0.31*	-0.01	0.08	0.13	---	0.06	-0.04	-0.02	-0.29**
SSBM	0.08	-0.20	-0.23	0.14	0.17	0.32**	---	0.95***	0.92***	0.14
DMTS	0.03	-0.29*	-0.22	0.12	0.17	0.11	0.94***	---	0.96***	0.22
Switch	0.05	-0.19	-0.22	0.13	0.18	0.22	0.96***	0.95***	---	0.18
Age	-0.03	-0.43***	-0.12	0.05	-0.05	-0.30*	0.05	0.16	0.06	---

Note. Correlations for heterosexuals are below the diagonal; correlations for bisexuals and "others" are above the diagonal.

*p ≤ .05

**p ≤ .01

***p ≤ .001

Table 4.3

Correlations Between Self-Objectification, Self-Surveillance, Body-Shame, Body (Dis)satisfaction (BASS and AES), Gender, CS Identity, and Age for Women and Men

	SO	SS	BS	BASS	AES	Hetero	SSBM	DMTS	Switch	Age
SO	---	-0.32**	-0.38***	0.24	0.23	0.08	0.07	0.05	0.06	-0.07
SS	-0.30*	---	0.66***	-0.49***	-0.40***	0.02	-0.16	-0.20	-0.17	-0.18
BS	0.06	0.16	---	-0.51***	-0.55***	0.01	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12	-0.12
BASS	0.17	-0.12	-0.38**	---	0.75***	-0.06	0.21	0.20	0.19	-0.01
AES	0.23	-0.08	-0.39**	0.82***	---	0.01	0.13	0.15	0.15	-0.12
Hetero	-0.00	0.15	0.19	-0.17	-0.04	---	-0.20	-0.15	-0.09	-0.16
SSBM	0.24	-0.33*	-0.09	0.15	0.13	0.05	---	0.97***	0.94***	0.15
DMTS	0.25	-0.36**	-0.12	0.13	0.14	-0.06	0.92***	---	0.97***	0.17
Switch	0.25	-0.26	-0.12	0.16	0.12	0.07	0.94***	0.91***	---	0.15
Age	0.13	-0.16	0.12	-0.00	-0.00	-0.16	0.23	0.27	0.21	---

Note. Correlations for men are below the diagonal; correlations for women are above the diagonal.

*p ≤ .05

**p ≤ .01

***p ≤ .001

Table 4.4

Beta Coefficients with Controls and Interacting Effects for Appearance Evaluation Scores (AES)

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Controls					
Women [Men]	0.177	0.214*	0.162	0.265	0.294
Heterosexual [Non-hetero]	0.013	-0.016	0.076	-0.071	-0.019
Age	-0.007	-0.051	-0.024	-0.024	-0.023
BMI	-0.446***	-0.454***	-0.404***	-0.405***	-0.434***
Independent Variables					
Self-Objectification	0.294***	0.213*	0.183*	0.185*	-0.419
Self-Surveillance		-0.262**	-0.074	-0.040	0.022
Body-Shame			-0.373***	-0.363***	-0.371***
Interacting Variables					
SS*Women				-0.119	-0.139
SO*BMI					0.650*
Statistics	R^2 = 0.263***	R^2 = 0.318***	R^2 = 0.414***	R^2 = 0.415***	R^2 = 0.445***

* Significant at $p \leq .05$ level.
** Significant at $p \leq .01$ level.
*** Significant at $p \leq .001$ level.