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Whips and Chains? Fact or Fiction? Content Analysis of Sadomasochism in Internet Personal Advertisements

Diane Kholos Wysocki and Jennifer Thalken

> 'Bind my ankles with your white cotton rope so I cannot walk. Bind my wrists so I cannot push you away. Place me on the bed and wrap your rope tighter around my skin so it grips my flesh. Now I know that struggle is useless.'
>
> (Apostolides, 1999, p. 6)

In order to study the sexual attitudes, identities, and behaviours of individuals involved in sadomasochism (S & M) it is necessary to understand the role of culture which heavily influences sexual behaviour. Historically, psychologists have viewed sexual behaviour as a biological or psychological phenomenon that reflects the drives, motives, and needs of an individual (Freud, 1962; Krafft-Ebing, 1886/1965). Horney (1967) believed that masochism in women was a result of the cultural constraints they faced with regards to social status, the sexual, and roles in society that kept women in a place of submissiveness. Sexuality has traditionally been explained by three paradigms – instinct, drive, and energy and unfortunately has assumed that sexuality equals heterosexuality, making heterosexuality the norm (Fergunson, 1989). Popular sexologists, such as, Ellis (1903/1926), Kinsey (1953), and Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny (1986) have constructed models of sexuality that reflect and reproduce male supremacy, which then becomes viewed as natural and universal, giving the impression that 'normal' male sexuality has control over female sexuality and that female sexuality should be passive and dependent (Coveney, Jackson, Jeffreys, Kay, & Mahony, 1984).

In contrast, other researchers have stressed that culture is the shaping force of sexuality and sexuality is therefore socially constructed

(Foucault, 1978; Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Giddens, 1992; Green, 1987; Simon & Gagnon, 1984; Vance, 1993; Weeks, 1986). Jeffery Weeks (1986) in *The Invention of Sexuality* stated that:

> We must learn to see that sexuality is something which society produces in complex ways. It is a result of diverse social practices that give meaning to human activities, of social definitions and self-definitions, of struggles between those who have power to define and regulate, and those who resist. Sexuality is not given; it is a product of negotiation, struggle and human agency. (p. 25)

Sexual identity includes the categories individuals use to locate themselves in relation to others (Michener, DeLamater, Schwartz, & Merton, 1990). This begins very early in life with the onset of puberty (Gagnon & Simon, 1973) and begins as a result of the sexual scripts that are available to teach us how to live our lives, which includes being sexual (Doctor, 1988; Laws & Schwartz, 1977; Simon & Gagnon, 1984, 1998). Sexual scripts refer to abstractions about sexuality that most individuals in a particular culture would recognise. For instance, in an American culture the term 'hooking up' has become known for meeting someone and having sex. Furthermore, the traditional heterosexual sexual script in our culture emphasises the different expectations for male and female behaviour and sets up a controversial relationship between the male who is expected to be aggressive, oversexed, and emotionally insensitive, verses the passive, unassertive female who must put up a façade that her sexuality is unattainable, while at the same time appearing sexy and interested in the males' advances. This is the sexual script that is common for our culture. In fact sexual scripts provide meaning for the internal sensations we feel during sexual desire and arousal (Else-Quest, Hyde, & DeLamater, 2005) and as a result, these scripts organise the order of our sexual acts and help us decode sexual situations and act on them if we desire. Without a script that is recognised so an individual can define the situation, name the actors, and plot the behaviour, nothing sexual is likely to happen (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Laws & Schwartz, 1977). In other words sexual scripts are a way of anticipating how sexual behaviour comes to be enacted (Simon & Gagnon, 1984).

We learn scripts when we watch television, read books, and go to the movies, and according to Giddens (1992) the scripts have changed over time. If our traditional sexual scripts are that we see two individuals who meet, kiss, cuddle, touch each others, genitals, and eventually have intercourse, then this becomes our scripts for being sexual. While the

script we learned growing up might have involved a man and a women having traditional intercourse with each other, by watching other more non-traditional movies and reading erotic books (Brown, 2002; Shortes, 1998) we find out that individuals are involved in all types of other sexual behaviours, such as, cross-dressing (Langstrom & Zucker, 2005; Wysocki, 1993), voluntary castration (Wassersug, Zelenietz, & Squire, 2004), an interest in feet and shoes (Weinberg, Williams, & Calhan, 1994), and S & M. Some of our knowledge about more non-traditional sexual scripts has happened because times have changed and the scripts that once were unacceptable are now more out in the open, and more attainable to those who want to view them. Some of the change is just a natural part of modernity (Giddens, 1992), and a result of the Internet that has increased our access to all kinds of sexual information for anyone with a computer (Ross, 2005; Wysocki, 1998).

It has been suggested in the mass media that the Internet, email, and chat mode is *the place* to go for online sexual relationships (Binik, Mah, & Kiesler, 1999; Elmer-Dewitt, 1995; Ross, 2005; Wysocki, 1998). Sex via the computer can develop through the interactive sharing of fantasies, looking at sexually explicit photographs, and/or sharing similar sexual interests (Bright, 1992; Rheingold, 1993; Ross, 2005). In 2004, ABC News Primetime Live conducted a sex survey to find out what Americans were doing behind closed doors and they found that as many as 40 million people admitted they have looked at porn websites (Langer, Arnedt, & Sussman, 2004). According to Survey.net, which began in October 2000 and currently has 69,435 respondents (InterCommerce Coporation, 2005), the Internet is a benign outlet for sexual frustration (38.6 per cent), makes the respondents more open-minded (36.8 per cent), improves their sex-life (24.9 per cent) and promotes more honest communication (21.5 per cent). Furthermore, the majority of respondents used the Internet to downloaded erotic pictures (56.1 per cent), read online sex stories (53.3 per cent), masturbated while online (40.5 per cent) or to the material they downloaded (34.6 per cent), talked dirty in IRC (25.5 per cent), exchanged erotic email (23.5 per cent), had sex with someone met online (15.0 per cent), placed or responded to an online personal ad (26.7 per cent), posted erotic pictures or sex stories (18.1 per cent), purchased a sex-related product advertised on the net (9.8 per cent), or watched or transmitted erotic CuSeeMe video (11.6 per cent).

People use the Internet to look for other people with similar interests and from those broader categories; people are able to locate more specific interests to satisfy whatever they desire. For instance, it is not difficult to find an Internet website that deals with sex and then from there, the individual can go to anything more specific, such as, transvestism, group sex, oral sex, or S & M. According to Wysocki (1998), people participate in online sex because they believe it offers them some sort of anonymity, they lack time in their personal life to find other people with similar sexual interests, the Internet provides them the ability to share sexual fantasies with others in the privacy of their own home, they can actually have online sexual activity (this includes mutual masturbation), and if they find someone they feel they are compatible with they can then meet this person offline.

It is through personal advertisements that people find each other on the Internet. With the increased availability of technological products, such as, computers, modems, and the Internet, social life as we have previously known it has changed forever. Personal ads, which used to be termed 'lonely hearts ads' (Strassberg & Holty, 2003), are an important source of gaining access to interpersonal relationships. Researchers have done experiments on the body types (Strassberg & Holty, 2003), linguistic behaviours (Groom & Pennebaker, 2005), and how the construction of gender takes place (Koch, Mueller, Kruse, & Zumbach, 2005) for people reading personal ads to see what they are looking for. Because it is too difficult for people who want to participate in S & M to find people who have similar desires in their day-to-day life (Sandnabba, Santtila, & Nordling, 1999), it makes sense that they would go to the Internet to find others who are also interested in S & M.

As a result, this study is a content analysis of adult personal advertisements of those who have placed ads for others to share their interest in sadomasochism on the Internet. The advertisements have not been manipulated; they are analysed as the author put them online. The goal of the study is to explore and describe the individuals who advertise online, while at the same time finding out what particular behaviours they are interested in and what type of person they want to find.

What is sadomasochism?

Sadism is a term that refers to the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), a French author, philosopher, and a sadomasochist, who described in detail the pleasurable sexual experiences of people who dominated, humiliated, and hurt their sexual partners. In his writings he also described those people who enjoyed being dominated, humiliated, and hurt during sex known as masochists. While many researchers wrote on the topic of sadism and masochism (Ellis, 1926; Freud, 1920/1961; Krafft-Ebing, 1886/1965) over one hundred years ago, it was not until the 1980s that attempts have been made to identity more about this topic and the

people involved in the activity (Weinberg, 1987). But even 20 years earlier Freud realised that those who participated in S & M were also 'normal individuals' (Freud, 1962).

Prior to this time it was thought that people who took part in bondage, being beaten, and humiliation for sexual pleasure, must have been mentally ill, violent, cruel, and crazy (Weinberg, 1987). Yet, what it really involves is the consensual power exchange between partners who are involved in acting where roles, such as, teacher–pupil, prison guard–inmate, or doctor–nurse are played out. S & M is very individualised and is sometimes used just to spice up sex lives of married people or for people who feel like they need sexuality to have a deeper meaning (LeMasters, 2002). Sometimes the submissive partner is physically bound and restrained, and while the goal is an orgasm, the act can be satisfying without an orgasm happening at all (Ernulf & Innalla, 1995). Furthermore, a sadomasochistic scene usually contains a relationship of dominance and submission, and the infliction of pain that is experienced as pleasurable by both partners. This is often times displayed as deliberate humiliation of the other party, where fetishistic elements, such as, toys and one or more ritualistic activities like bondage or chains are used (Sandnabba, Santtila, & Nordling, 1999).

There are a number of behaviours that those who participate in S & M can include in their sexual scene. According to Alison, Santtila, Sandnabba, & Nordling, (2001) while 'individuals emphasize a particular set of behaviors but also engage in other behaviors to a more limited extent... suggest[s] that it makes sense to conceptualize sadomasochism as a distinct phenomenon' (p. 2). Therefore the sexual behaviours have been grouped by other researchers into four categories; *hypermasculinity, administration of pain, humiliation,* and *physical restriction* (Alison et al. 2001). This makes it much easier for researchers to categorise and analyse the data being investigated.

More current studies on sadomasochism have found that individuals are very interested in the subject and do participate in the behaviour (Alison et al. 2001; Apostolides, 1999; Donnelly & Fraser, 1998; Ernulf & Innalla, 1995; Santtila, Sandnabba, Alison, & Nordling, 2002). In one study of 320 college students in a large urban Southeast university, students were given a 220 closed ended survey that included questions on their current sexual practices and interests (Donnelly & Fraser, 1998). Results showed that males were aroused more often by both fantasising about and participating in a variety of sadomasochistic sexual behaviours than females. Another study was done to compare the S & M preferences between individuals obtained in two different S & M clubs in Finland (Sandnabba et al. 1999). One club was for heterosexual

participants and the other was for homosexual participants. They found that between the ages of 21–25 years the majority of the respondents had their first S & M experience and then began to practice S & M on a regular basis. The emotional reactions after the first S & M experience were consistently positive and one-third of the respondents stated that only S & M sex could satisfy them. To distinguish if females would be more likely to engage in behaviours related to humiliation (i.e., receiving pain and gay males more likely to report behaviours related to hypermasculinity (i.e., giving pain), women and men of S & M clubs were used for this study (Alison et al. 2001). They found that females engaged in more humiliation behaviours, while men engaged in hypermasculinity and administration of pain facets.

Method

In order to learn more about the sexual behaviours of sadomasochists on the Internet, permission was requested and granted from the University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to any data being collected. IRB approval is important in Internet research, even though individuals have publicly displayed their profiles on the Internet. Because they are human subjects, as researchers we are ethically bound to obtain permission from our institution as other researchers have suggested before collecting data (Jones, 1999; Schroer, 1999; Wysocki, 1999). It is noteworthy that we had no interaction with the people who put their profiles online. We only printed off their profiles and analysed what they had published publicly on the Internet. We have done our best to keep their identities hidden. Once permission was granted, a search for 'adult web personals' was conducted on the Internet and 'Alt.com' was discovered. Under 'alt.com' the 'World's Largest BDSM & Alternative Lifestyle Personals' was found and used to collect data for this project. The main page of the website stated it had '13,005 Members online NOW... 18,984 New Photos this week *Idots* and 3,462,337 Active Members [and had] 21, 036 listings in Nebraska!' where the study took place during the spring of 2002 (Alt.com, 2002).

On this website, individuals seek others to share in their alternative lifestyle. Locating someone with similar interests is pretty easy. When searching for others, one could choose who they were looking for, the role (S & M) they which to participate in, age range, state, country, and type of sexual behaviour they were interested in. Before any search could take place, one must first become a member. Jennifer Thalken, the second author of this article, went online and collected all the data for this project as part of her Women's Studies Senior Seminar Project.

It was agreed prior by Jennifer, Diane Wysocki (the first author of this chapter), and a research methods class that Jennifer was taking at the time she was designing this project, that Jennifer would put her own basic information onto the website (except anything that would identify her) to collect the profiles that were used for the analysis and that she would not give her credit card information. To become a member each person had to answer questions about who they were (man, woman, group, etc.), what they were looking for (man woman, group, etc.), what activities they were looking for (email, phone fantasies, etc.), the behaviour they wanted to explore (props, devices, and or scenes), their birthday, where they lived, the language they spoke, and their email address. The next step was to search specific behaviours that interested the viewer. Upon clicking the *Browse* button, Jennifer went to the page that gave the user the ability to search by state or by country.

For this study, the criteria used were both men and women seeking others, over the age of 19 years, for any role, any behaviour, and in the United States. The website gave a list of men and women seeking others. However, because the subscription was free, it limited the search to only ten profiles a day. Over a period of two weeks, 45 profiles for men and 35 profiles for women for a total of 80 profiles were collected. Jennifer Thalken had no interaction with anyone who placed an ad on the website. She only collected their profiles, printed them out, and filed them in a notebook under the category in which they belonged, such as, women looking for men, men looking for women, and men/women looking for groups. The profiles were randomly selected by the computer because of the free subscription. If we had decided to pay for a subscription we would have had more control over the random selection of the profiles, but since this was a student project, it was decided that no credit card information would be given. As a result only the free computer generated profiles were those that were coded and the data placed into SPSS. While we could have collected more, we made the decision to stop at 80 because there were so many variables that were going to be coded that it was decided that 80 members were enough to collect for the scope of this project.

The individuals whose personal ads were analysed ranged in age from 19–52 years for females and from 25–66 years for males. The mean age in this study was almost 40 years. This is similar to other studies that suggest that respondents are older individuals rather than those in their early 20s (Donnelly & Fraser, 1998). Therefore, they knew what they wanted. The majority of both males or females had higher than a college degree, were some other religion besides Christian or Catholic, and had a variety of occupations, as shown in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1 Demographic description of respondents

	Female	Male	Total
Sex	43.8%	56.3%	100%
Age (mean)	38.11	39.73	39.03
SD	8.0	8.68	8.37
Education			
High School graduate	5.3	1.3	6.7
Some College	12.0	8.0	20.0
Associates Degree	6.7	1.3	8.0
BA/BS	9.3	24.0	33.3
Some Graduate School	2.7	16.0	18.7
MA/MS/MBA	5.3	5.3	10.7
MD/PhD	1.3	1.3	2.7
Religion			
Christian	2.5	10.1	12.7
Catholic	6.3	6.3	12.7
Other	26.6	39.2	65.8
New Age/Pagan	7.6	1.3	8.9
Profession			
Prefer not to say	8.9	6.3	15.2
Engineer or technical	3.8	19.0	22.8
Medical (nursing or doctor)	3.8	0.0	3.8
	10.1	16.5	26.6
Business	2.5	0.0	2.5
Clerical (officer or shop)	.0	1.3	1.3
Design (architect or fashion)	2.5	2.5	5.1
	.0	1.3	1.3
Education	1.3	0.0	1.3
Government	10.1	10.0	20.3
Location of the advertiser			
Pacific	12.5	5.0	17.5
West Coast	2.5	3.8	6.3
Midwest	12.5	10.0	22.5
South and South East	3.8	22.5	26.3
East and New England	10.0	15.0	25.0
Did not answer	2.5	0.0	2.5
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual	3.8	16.3	20.0
Bisexual	22.5	15.0	37.5
Homosexual	2.5	5.0	7.5
Prefer not to say	3.8	1.3	5.0
Open to anything	6.3	12.5	18.8
Curious	3.8	6.3	10.0
Transgender	1.3	.0	1.3

While the profiles were from all over the United States and individuals were able to find people in their own area, it was not necessary to meet someone in their own area because most people were willing to travel if they found someone they were interested in online. The profiles were divided into five regions using the state and regional atlas of the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Many people said they would travel if they found someone who interested them for further play. Furthermore, the Internet, chat rooms, video conference, and cameras make sexual play on the Internet very easy to do (Wysocki, 1998). Where someone lives is no barrier. The majority, 37.5 per cent of both males and females, stated they were bisexual, while 10 per cent said they were just curious. Other studies support this data and have found that S & M is popular among those who are educated, middle and upper classes, and both male and female (Alison et al., 2001; Apostolides, 1999; Sandnabba et al., 1999; Weinberg, 1987). That is not surprising considering the alternative lifestyle they are exploring. The cost of the travel and equipment and the time it takes would attract educated people with above average incomes.

Sex

The majority of advertisements displayed photographs in their ads. Surprisingly, many of the photos included face shots, and many included photos of their genitals. For men, they were often erect and stroking themselves or having themselves stroked by someone else in the picture. Most men mentioned the size of their penis. Women, on the other hand, were displayed in sexy lingerie and not-often-revealing shots. If they were revealing, their breasts were showing or they were bent over and their buttocks were showing. Rarely was there a picture of an exposed vagina.

As shown in Table 13.2, more females (19 per cent) than males (13.9 per cent) preferred the submissive role, and more men (21.5 per cent) were willing to switch between being dominant and submissive. Almost an equal number of males (30 per cent) and females (32.5 per cent) were looking for men to become involved with, while more males were looking for women (46.3 per cent), couples (36.3 per cent), gay couples (18.8 per cent), lesbian couples (20.0 per cent), and groups (25 per cent). Donnelly and Fraser (1998) suggest that there are gender differences and they might be due to the scripts that men and women learn when they are growing up. For instance, if women are socialised to be reluctant to express their sexual desires, they are then more hesitant about new sexual

Table 13.2 Percentages of sexual behaviours of the respondents

	Female	Male	Total
Preferred sexual role			
Dominant	11.4	12.7	24.1
Submissive	19.0	13.9	32.9
Switch between the two	8.9	21.5	30.4
Prefer not to say	5.1	7.6	12.7
Looking for men	32.5	30.0	62.5
Looking for women	26.3	46.3	72.5
Looking for a couple	15.0	36.3	51.3
Looking for a gay couple	3.8	18.8	22.5
Looking for a lesbian couple	8.8	20.0	28.8
Looking for groups	7.5	25.0	32.5
Interested in erotic email exchange	5.0	12.5	17.5
Interested in performing only with little or no contact	8.8	12.5	21.3
Interested in watching only with little or no contact	6.3	13.8	20.0
Interested in active participation	42.5	55.0	97.5

experiences such as S & M. This could be why women are more likely to want to be submissive than men.

Both males and females were looking for erotic email exchange (17.5 per cent), performing (21.3 per cent), and watching via video camera (20.0 per cent) with little or no actual contact. However, the majority of those who posted ads on the Internet (97.5 per cent) were interested in active participation. This means they wanted to meet each other. Wysocki (1998) found in her study of sex in an online chat line that 57 per cent of her respondents had already met someone face-to-face who they developed contact with initially online. It seems that the point of the Internet is to make the connection for the face-to-face meetings. But even Alt.com gives guidelines for 'going offline for a meeting' and warns 'don't head straight to the dungeon for your first meeting', but to always meet in a public place, stay in a public place and bring a cell phone. If all goes well, then set up another date.

Participants were looking for all different types of sexual behaviour as shown in Table 13.3. They had the option of checking boxes of the behaviours they were interested in. They could check as many as they wanted. As shown, the majority of those who placed ads were interested in bondage, ass play, dildos, and toys. After that the behaviours vary. While the individuals who placed ads were given many options, no one

Table 13.3 Percentage of sadomasochistic behaviours and role-plays

Behaviour *(http://alt.com/go/page/glossary.html?site=bdsm&trlid= mag_cover-1)*	% N = 80
Bondage – The generic term for practising tying or restraint. Bondage takes many forms, including elaborate rope bondage, chains, metal handcuffs, or leather restraints, as examples.	67.5
Ass play – Everything from drooling, spitting on, licking and eating around the asshole (rimming), to inserting dildos, beads, cocks, fists, and various other creative things (hopefully not food!) into the ass (arse).	66.3
Dildos – A dildo is inserted into the rectum. There are various sizes, from finger size to enormous.	55.0
Toys – Equipment used in an S & M scene; aka, tool, gear, equipment.	46.3
Domination – To be dominated by a Master/Mistress. This includes obeying instructions, carrying out tasks, humiliation, and being dominated generally. Domination, in its strictest definition, is largely psychological play and is distinct from 'topping' which refers to physical S & M.	38.8
Face slapping – Slapping someone's face with an open hand.	38.8
Spanking – Involves using the hand on someone's bare butt cheeks so they turn flaming red.	35.5
Whips – The sharp crack of a whip is a staple in BDSM games. Whips can be used gently and sensually or to turn someone's bare butt cheeks flaming red.	35.0
Oral fixation – Oral sex.	33.8
Vibrators – Sex toys that run on batteries and vibrate that can be inserted into the vagina or the rectum.	33.8
Clothespins – Clothespins, clips, often metal, sometimes clothes pegs, which are attached to the nipples, or genitals.	30.0
Masturbation – Giving oneself sexual relief or pleasure, whether male or female.	28.8
Gang banging – Usually one person getting fucked by many, but could also refer to orgies.	27.5
Leather outfits – Leather is not only the product, but also can be a keyword for a type of lifestyle. Leathermen are usually gay males who also are into BDSM. It can imply an 'old guard' sort of mentality where discipline is stricter and rules of interaction apply.	25.0
Blindfolds – From a make-shift scarf to custom leather eye covering, blindfolds are used in bondage and D/s situations or in vanilla sex to create helplessness, dependence, vulnerability, and/or to heighten other senses and intensify sensation play.	23.8

Breast torture – Erotic play that involves binding the breasts tightly. Generally it involves restraints (rope, rubber, etc.) that encircle each breast tightly where it joins the chest. The breasts and nipples become engorged with blood and exquisitely sensitive to the slightest touch. Stroking, clamping, or whipping can cause intense pain and/or pleasure.	23.8
Exhibitionism – People getting off by exposing themselves, either alone or with a partner, in public places, or even in their homes if they're aware they can be seen by neighbours, etc.	22.5
Power exchange – A person who can 'switch' between being either a dominant or a submissive. Switching is quite common amongst lifestyle Masters/Mistresses, but is rarely part of professional sessions.	22.5
Rimming – The act of licking the anal rim of another person in order to gain and/or give sexual pleasure.	21.3
Voyeurism – For those who like to watch. Broadly speaking, it refers to being sexually aroused simply by watching other people engage in sexual activity.	21.3
Water sports – Practice where the dominant urinates on the submissive. Watersports includes 'golden showers' (q.v.) and may also include 'toilet training' (q.v.). Also known as urolagnia.	21.3
Cock binding – A ring made from metal, rubber or leather, worn round the base of the penis to control blood flow. A cock ring can either help sustain an erection or prevent one if applied to a flaccid penis.	20.0
Fist fucking – A hand is inserted into the anus or vagina, usually one finger at a time. Getting the knuckle spread (the widest point of the hand) through the opening is usually the most difficult part of the process; after this point you are well and truly 'fisting'. The process takes a lot of lubrication. It also takes patience on the part of the dominant and openness and relaxation on the part of the submissive.	20.0
Handcuffs – Handcuffs are pre-made to bind hands to each other or to a stationary object – as opposed to rope or other bondage methods. They have history and association – police, prison, etc. – which makes them for fantasy play	20.0
Wax – Hot candle wax dripped on the body is an effective means of inflicting pain	20.0
24/7–24-hours, 7 days a week. Where the sub lives with, and is controlled by, the Master/Mistress on that basis.	18.8
Collar and lead – Worn to denote submissiveness or slavery to a particular Master/Mistress.	17.5

Table 13.3 (Continued)

Behaviour *(http://alt.com/go/page/glossary.html?site=bdsm&trlid= mag_cover-1)*	% N = 80
Cross dressing – To dress in the clothing of the opposite sex. Usually applies to men dressing as women, in heels, dresses, nylons, bras, women's underwear, and so forth, but may also apply to women.	13.8
Hair pulling – Usually part of rough play and brat play, like biting. Can also be used as a kind of bondage to incapacitate a person's head by holding tightly to the hair.	13.8
Shaving – Shaving hair anywhere on the body for excitement.	12.8
Enema – An enema is used to fill the colon with water or other liquid. Often used in medical scenes.	12.5
Chains – Erotic appeal drawn from chains, manifested in ornamentation (dog collars, etc.), in bondage activities (shackling legs together, etc.) or as leads and other symbols of 'ownership' (dog-leash).	11.3
Lace – Getting erotic pleasure from dressing in, viewing, or playing with silky/lacy items and fabrics	8.8
Body odours – Sexual stimulation from either good or bad body odour.	7.5
Electric shocks – Various devices delivering electric impulses or wave forms (e-stim) and applied to the skin for everything from sensation play to pain. It's often applied to genitalia and nipples and other sensitive areas, and as such can be part of great sexual arousal as well as heavy torture scenes – depending on the implement and the degree.	7.5
Latex – A type of rubber used in the fetish fashion world for a skin tight fit.	6.3
Tongue fetish – Someone who likes to use their tongue on another person for pleasure.	6.3
Chastity devices – Devices placed on both male and female genitalia to prevent sex. A dominant may put a chastity device on his/her submissive to show or exert control over the sub's sexual being.	5.0
Cupping (suction of the skin) – A process originating in traditional Chinese healing, but used as sensation play and for temporary marking. After creating a heat differential between the inside and outside of a glass cup, the skin is sucked up into the cup creating temporary circular mounds on the skin.	5.0
Mask, blindfold – Usually found at fetish balls, used by primitivists, and in-scene. Dominants may use them to create heightened sense of danger/arousal in a submissive or by submissives as a kind of sensory deprivation	5.0
Piercing – Either temporary or permanent. If temporary, needles are used and removed at the end of the scene. There are many kinds of body piercing which are permanent, including piercings to the genitalia and nipples.	5.0
Chinese balls – Inserted into the rectum and pulled out at the moment of orgasm. Chinese balls are said to increase the pleasure of the orgasm tremendously.	3.8
High heels – Having a thing for them or wearing them (esp. cross-dressing). In play, they can be worshipped and licked, or they can step on and crush.	3.8
Caging – A metal cage in which the submissive is locked as part of a scene. The related term 'cage of little ease' implies a cage which is so small that the submissive cannot rest in a comfortable position.	2.5
Feathers – A form of sensation play, used in warm-up to foreplay, massage, or sadistic pain, or to offer temporary relief from sadistic pain.	2.5
Slings, crosses – Being hung up, or suspended, by the tied wrists, wrists and ankles or even feet.	2.5
Knives, razor – Knife play can be any play involving a knife, for example using a knife erotically, especially around the genitals or nipples. The knife itself has erotic appeal and there's an appeal that comes from suggestions of danger to actual risk. Extreme knife play gets into cutting and scarification.	1.3
Rubber outfits – Worn or used in scenes. It is possible to acquire a massive wardrobe of clothing and toys.	1.3
Role Playing	26.3
Nurse/doctor	30.0
Rape scenes	27.5
Nun/Priest play	1.3

in this sample said they were interested in shit play, diapers, branding, or blood.

Almost one-third of the profiles stated they were interested in role playing. This makes sense given that S & M is really about acting out who is in charge and who is not. Some were interested in the roles of nurse/doctor, and a surprisingly large number were interested in rape scenes.

What the profiles say

Everyone who placed a profile on Alt.com was able to give a lot of detail about themselves and what they wanted besides being given the option of checking boxes about descriptions and behaviour information. The participants were very clear about what they want, and that makes posting online appealing (Ross, 2005; Wysocki, 1998). Participants can ask for what they want and another individual can read through the ads. If they see something that they are attracted to they can respond. If not, they go to the next ad. For instance, 'Love Grey' considers himself a gay novice. He has pierced nipples and would like other piercings, but says that he wants an older gray haired man to take over his body for his own pleasure. He says is also fascinated with electrotorture, but has never tried it.

Goffman (1963) believes that if an individual possesses attributes that discredits them in the eyes of others, it can greatly affect their self-concept of themselves and the way they interact with other people. The anonymity of the Internet allows the individuals to conceal themselves in a way to avoid receiving negative reactions from others and therefore provides a shield against stigma. Furthermore, the Internet is said to attract disproportionately those who might be stigmatised if their sexual interest should become known to others (Ross, 2005). Love Grey is not likely to ask someone in his face-to-face network of friends to electro-torture with him because the risk of stigma is just too large, but that risk is not so big online. As a result, asking for exactly what he wants and hoping he finds someone who has a similar interest is the perfect use of the Internet. In another example, 'Dog' might not be willing to say the following in a face-to-face group, but it is much easier behind the shield of his computer.

> I am looking for a LARGE COCK to fuck me HARD after I suck your cock to the brink... I don't play games, I just love to fuck hard and be fucked hard... One-timers are fine but it would also be nice to be able to rely on regular FUCK FESTS and I am MORE THAN WILLING to be USED & ABUSED. GANG BANGS or MULTIPLE FUCKS are welcomes; and quite honestly desired. NO PICTURES, NO RESPONSES!!! [Capitals are in the ad.]

Dog had four pictures that showed his naked shaved penis.

The Internet also provides room for individuals to express the 'unexplored parts of themselves' (Turkle, 1995). Users can take on completely

different identities and portray themselves as someone they might just be only in their fantasies. 'Stephanie' says she is a cross-dresser. She might not be able to be this in her real life, so she is able to explore this side of 'herself' online. She says she is bored with toys and 'needs to feel a warm dick in my ass and needs another cross dresser to fulfill me in every way'. She also says she wants her first encounter to be with a cross dresser who is passable because she is not just looking for a man to 'fuck me... I want a (wo)man who knows what it is like to be sexy!'

It seems to be the same for 'Sub69' who is male, single, and looking for a dominant lady to serve and service. He goes on to say:

> I beg your forgiveness for my ignorance and inexperience about the proper terminology and protocol, but am willing to learn. I am looking for a local lady who would train me to meet all of your needs and who would find and push my limits. I beg that you please give a worthless sub a chance to prove his willingness to serve and please.

Since meeting the perfect sexual partner is not always easy (Wysocki, 1998), it makes sense that if someone finds another who can fulfil their sexual fantasies on the Internet, they are going to meet each other face-to-face. As we stated earlier, many of the profiles said they wanted to eventually meet the individuals in person. The Internet is just a vehicle to set up the meeting of those with similar sexual interests and a way of narrowing the field to find those with very specific sexual interests.

Discussion

In conclusion, this content analysis of advertisements on an S & M web site found that people used it for many different reasons. However, the most common reason was to meet people who had the same specific fantasies and desires so they could ultimately meet face-to-face to participate in S & M behaviours. The anonymity of this website and the ease in which one could get involved and place an ad made finding people with similar interests much easier than finding them in their face-to-face world. The Internet is the modern day vehicle for the older paper versions of the personal ads. Furthermore, the advancements of technology allow for the ease of matching those with similar interests. All the profiles need to do is check the boxes of the behaviours that interest them and the website plays matchmaker. The rest is up to them.

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14
Conclusion

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The Internet has become a part of our everyday lives. The number of individuals using the Internet is continuing to grow, as well as the number of hours individuals spend online. In fact, the Internet has become so popular in the UK that the average Briton spends more time logged onto the Internet than watching television (Johnson, 2006). As reported in our tome, individuals are flocking to the Internet to find romantic partners (Madden & Lenhart, 2006). Yahoo.com claims almost 380 million visitors per month to their online dating site (Pasha, 2005), and FriendFinder.com say they have over 2.6 million active members (Dating Sites Reviews.com, n.d.). Social networking sites like Myspace, where romantic matches are often made, are also increasing in popularity. So much so, that the Nielsen 'netratings' report that Myspace has received 384 million unique visitors with a year-on-year growth of 367 per cent (Bausch & Han, 2006).

Our book has provided examples of the numerous ways individuals meet online. Some of these spaces were not set up with the intention to facilitate romance. For example, DeVoss (this volume) tells us how love blossomed in the early days of the bulletin board system. However, other spaces are set up for individuals to find a romantic match. Some of these online dating companies have attempted to take a scientific approach to matchmaking (see Whitty & Carr, 2006a). Whitty (this volume) and McKenna (this volume) describe how relationships initiate and develop on online dating sites. These authors concur that individuals can feel freer online to experiment with identity and explore presentations of self. Whitty and McKenna in their chapters also explain how the trajectory of relationships that initiate on online dating sites can be quite different to how relationships progress in other spaces online.