

Abstract

Within communities of practitioners of BDSM (Bondage & Discipline, Dominance & Submission, Sadism and Masochism) I had heard anecdotal reports of barriers to entering or participating openly in counselling or psychotherapy. However, I found the psychotherapeutic literature had rarely reflected and analysed such voices. Amongst multiple discourses around BDSM, pathology had been the dominant therapy paradigm on the subject. This had been challenged by affirmative ethical approaches to diverse consensual bodily practices. Inhabiting an intersectional role in both kink communities and as a therapist I led a phenomenological investigation into barriers that SM (Sadism/Masochism) practitioners might have perceived when considering accessing counselling or psychotherapy and I found some common themes.

Introduction

My motivation for this research germinated from the seeds of two anecdotes from friends which I reproduced below. In this section I then introduced myself as a researcher situated by my personal history and environment. Next I sketched out what I meant by BDSM and other related terms and then identified some discourses around BDSM bodily practices and desires. I ended my introduction with some important currents in integrative psychotherapy and wider society that formed the context for this research.

Two personal recollections