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## **GAY SADOMASOCHISM AS HYPER-MASCULINE PERFORMANCE**

Gay men are excluded from the hegemonic definition of masculinity by the socially created norms and values that define masculinity; this hierarchy devalues gay men in the context of other men (Connell and Messerschmidt 831). Rules of masculinity are not entirely fixed though, and men often fail to meet the requirements of hegemonic masculinity. In situations where men fail to meet the requirements they may call upon a hyper-masculine performance to assure their status as masculine (Pascoe 332). Gay men who engage in sadomasochistic behavior call upon the power of the hegemon to enact sexual performances, referred to as "scenes" in the sadomasochist community (Kamel 173). Through appropriation of masculine styles and approximation of heteronormative masculine behaviors gay men involved in sadomasochism enact a hyper-masculine performance.

Sadomasochism is a variation of sexuality that is an alternative to more traditional penetrative intercourse. The strict technical interpretation of sadomasochism in its purest form is deriving sexual pleasure from pain. This is the infliction pain on others, sadism, and the receiving of pain upon one's self, masochism (Stiles and Clark 174; Weinberg, Williams and Moser 374; Weiss 230). The infliction of pain takes many forms. The most stereotypical and identifiable form of inflicting pain in sadomasochism is through the use of a whip or flogger

(Newmahr 320). Other forms of sadomasochism include nipple torture (by clamping), weighting of the scrotum, cutting of skin, punching, biting, tickling and stressful bondage positions (Spengler 453; Aggrawal 369-382).

### **Theoretical Background**

The concept of gender as a binary is deceptive and ignores spaces between genders as well as the multiple intersectional identities that function as distinct genders themselves. In the case of the masculine gender there is a push toward the achieving of a hegemonic masculine identity. Not all males are eligible to achieve this status either because of ascribed characteristics such as sexual orientation or race. In the study of masculinity one of the intersections of identity that is prohibited is that between masculinity and homosexuality. While some gay men choose to construct their own gender performance without regard for the requirements for hegemonic masculinity, others construct themselves in a way to assimilate to the expectations of masculinity or appropriate attributes of the hegemon to construct their own competing masculine identity. Gay men involved in sadomasochism fall into the last category and build their own masculine identity through an appropriation of hegemonic and hyper-masculine traits. The appropriation occurs through an emulation of attitudes, fetishizing of material culture and performance of the goals of masculinity through sexual activity.

At the core of my assertion that gay men who engage in sadomasochism attempt to assimilate normative masculine values is the concept of the hyper-masculine performance. Hyper-masculinity is not the same as reproducing a hegemonic identity. The key difference is that hyper-masculinity is often not performed at all times by men who have constructed their

masculinity identity in the hegemon, but it is instead reserved for homo-social situations or instances where a man's masculinity has been challenged or threatened (Mosher and Tomkins 62). Hyper-masculinity is an exaggerated performance of stereotypical male behavior. There is often an emphasis on physical strength, self-reliance sexuality, risk taking and aggression (Mosher and Serkin 163). At the core of hyper-masculine performance is an attempt to gain respect from other men and to be accepted in the "brotherhood" of masculinity (Kimmel 113).

In the book "Gay Macho" Martin Levine introduces the concept of the gay clone, essentially a gay male who embodies and embraces the culture of homosexual masculinity while simultaneously presenting as the product of normative socialization (Levine 11). To embrace the normative socializations of masculinity requires a "relentless repudiation of femininity" (Levine 13). Levin proposed that social pressures required gay men to image themselves similar to their straight counterparts or to otherwise be seen as failed men. This social construction of "non-macho" gay men as "failed" negatively impacted their attractiveness to other gay men who subscribed to the same stylistic interpretation of masculinity (Levine 54). Affection and other displays of emotion are strictly forbidden in masculinity by this requirement (Levine 13). The limitations on emotion and the rejection of passivity are directly contradictory to homosexual relationships (Levine 18). This is the root of the social exclusion of gay men from hegemonic masculinity and the catalyst for the hyper-masculinity presentation, or cloning of straight masculinity (Levine 11).

There are a variety of theoretical frameworks that inform academic discourse on the gender presentation in various facets of society, one that seems especially relevant to discussing the intersection of sadomasochism and gay masculinity is Judith Butler's concept of performativity. Butler discusses gender as a cultural construction that is inscribed upon bodies at

the surface level, as a performative construction. The idea of performativity takes gender beyond simply being a performance, an act which stands alone, to being enacted as a repetition of multiple *original* performances which are contingent upon culturally constructed meanings to be intelligible (Butler loc245, 2345, 2454). The importance of performativity to the implementation of hyper-masculinity in sadomasochism is that it provides the structure upon which to understand the cultural significance of the symbols used and the types of acts that are implemented for sexual pleasure. Butler conceptualizes gender as being a repetitive process by which acts are defined as either masculine or feminine (Butler loc2464). I will extend, and perhaps stretch, Butler's perspective of gender somewhat as I am less concerned with the cultural intelligibility as a direct effect, but more as an enabling feature of the eroticism of masculinity.

To engage with the eroticism of masculinity I will invoke Michael Kimmel's perspective to digest the boundaries of homosocial brotherhood of the hegemon that he refers to as "Guyland." The "Guyland" approach to masculinity extends the concept of the social construction of masculinity, prescribing an institutional model for conceiving of the structure of masculinity (Kimmel 29). Kimmel presents "Guyland" as the source of the social pressures to conform to a certain hegemonic style of masculinity (Kimmel 28). Kimmel also addresses homo-erotic elements that are present in an otherwise heterosexual masculinity (Kimmel 113). The consideration of these elements provides a theoretical background from which the risks and rewards of homo-erotic experiences in homo-social relationships can be explored. Homo-erotic experiences such as being involved in a "circle jerk" and being forced to eat ejaculate by older "guys" may seem contrary to the rules of masculinity, but are often components of homo-social bonding experiences (Kimmel 113).

In the construction of masculinity heterosexuality is imperative and deviations from that is cause for a feminized identity (Connell 736). The degree to which homosexuality impacts masculine identity can be observed in the implementation of fag discourse as a social sanction. Fag discourse involves the labeling of man as “fag” or other name implying homosexuality by other men for a social transgression, regardless of the erotic load of the transgression. Most commonly the labeling is used when a man shows weakness or emotion, both of which are prohibited in masculinity (Pascoe 330). For men who identify as gay, have been socially categorized as gay as a result of their expression of “gender of object choice” (Seidman 24) fag discourse is more than a social sanction or label, it is an exclusion from masculinity that is a component of an intricate system for managing non-masculine transgressions (Pascoe 330).

For gay men to be excluded from masculinity denies them social power and in some instances can also be a denial of agency. For some gay men the answer to the problem of social exclusion is to not be gay for the purpose of social identification. Homosexuality is a concealable trait and as such the difficulty encountered with the presentation of the stigmatized identity can be suppressed by passing (Goffman 42). To socially pass means that all traces of the gay identity must be hidden. The gender presentation must be unquestionably masculine and desires must be dismissed (Connell). The difficulty in maintaining a state of passing is that to have access to masculinity and all of the benefits it provides requires sacrificing interpersonal intimacy, opportunities for relationships and expression of a “true identity” (Goffman 99). The lack of interpersonal intimacy through self-disclosure prevents the creation of strong friendships with other men, limiting access to the homosocial interaction required for interacting with masculinity. Gay men that do not pass either because of their gender expression or as a result of self-disclosure exist outside of the hegemon. As a result of social change and a tenancy for more

openness the gay identity itself grants these men access to a community. The problem for gay men that enter into those communities is that because of the gender binary there is a recognition of a degraded status by being involved in a group that has been deemed stigmatized and not having access to mainstream conventional hegemonic masculine society. Other gay men take on their degraded or feminized status by way of asserting themselves in the realms to which they have been excluded. This often is in the form of a hyper-masculine identity. Engaging in hyper-masculine displays is similar to passing in that it changes the personal form of gender presentation. Adopting a hyper-masculine identity does not require denying the homosexual identity (Levine 145). Instead, engaging in hyper-masculinity involves displaying more traits characteristic of masculinity such as aggression, sexual dominance, physical skill and homosociality. In essence, to engage a hyper-masculine identity is confronting the stigma of gay identity through the normal form of recourse for deviations from masculinity (Bird 120).

Some feminists and gender theorists attempt to separate gender and sexuality. One such theorist, Gayle Rubin, goes so far as to claim “it is essential to separate gender and sexuality analytically to more accurately reflect their separate social existence” (Rubin 170). While establishing gender and sexuality as separate phenomena for the purpose of extracting gender from the politics of sexuality would reduce the gender violence on implementations of sexuality it does not reflect the true nature of social existence. Rubin ignores the depth of the intersectional association between sexuality and gender. To claim masculinity is to be straight, either in fact, action or presentation. Sexuality and gender are deeply interconnected. The present state of sexuality in society is dependent upon gender presentation and its underlying assumptions of biology. The inverse is also true; gender is enacted and designed around sexuality. Masculine identity is often maintained and defended through discourse of sexual conquest or through verbal

objectification of women (Bird 122). An attempt to separate sexuality and gender at this stage in social progress would render both as unintelligible.

### **Sadomasochism as the Eroticization of Masculinity**

For gay men involved in sadomasochism, which involves power exchange, aggression and domination, the perception of an intact masculine identity is important. For some it is the ultimate homo-social experience, with all signs of femininity excluded (Kamel 172). From this interpretation, gay sadomasochism relies upon the socially constructed masculine roles and the attitudes associated with it. An interesting interpretation made by Kamel in his analysis of the homosocial aspects of gay sadomasochism is that gay men who are masochists, the passive partner in S/M, exhibit more traits defined as masculine than their heterosexual counterparts who seek erotic satisfaction through being dominated by women (Kamel 171). The passivity permitted in gay sadomasochism is comparable to the homoerotic elements that are permitted in other forms of homosocial interaction in being a transgression against masculinity that is somehow, paradoxically, integrated into the masculine socialization process.

Masculinity is eroticized in sadomasochism, but such an eroticization is not a result of the sadomasochistic interactions alone. There are other types of paraphilic sexuality that contribute to the process of making masculinity an erotic element for men who engage in sadomasochism. Key elements involved are other elements of BDSM (Bondage/Discipline, Dominant/Submission, Sadism/Masochism), fetishism and role-playing (Kamel 176; Levine 94; Scott 14). These other elements give context and social content to the acts of sadomasochism. Domination and submission provides for a hierarchical structure with binary

power relations, while bondage/discipline provides a mechanism to increase the risk involved. Fetish provides a mechanism by which masculine symbols can be appropriated into S/M culture. The role playing attributes provide a way to invoke distinctly masculine social scripts into the scenes and also provide an opportunity to include more traditional methods of homosocial bonding. While sadomasochism can stand alone as a way to eroticize masculine concepts it seldom is ever enacted by itself and is often accompanied by other elements. Sadomasochism, fetishism and domination are all categories that have been socially created in the BDSM subculture to describe certain activities, but the boundaries are by no means fixed and there is the possibility for multiple elements to inform each other (Weiss 230).

It would not be accurate to say that as long as there have been homosexuals there has been a homosexual sadomasochistic identity, but the modern sadomasochistic identity does have an origin in the earliest actions toward gay activism. The relationship between sadomasochism and homosexuality emerged in the 1950s when homosexuals in the Mattachine Society revolted against the negative ‘sissy’ imagery being presented to represent homosexuals in the media by presenting a hyper-masculine leather-clad image, asserting their dominance and aggressive capability. The gender presentation that was encouraged by Mattachine primarily involved wearing leather, boots and other artifacts of masculine presentation (Scott 151). Those early attempts at masculinizing homosexuality would likely now be associated with what is referred to as “leather culture”, which is both a baseline for BDSM culture and a culture of its own. Modern BDSM culture continues to embrace hyper-masculine identity and uses it as a baseline for the sub-culture. What the subculture itself identifies as “play” requires a level of skill and proficiency (Newmahr 314). This “play” can involve the infliction of pain through various implements, physical restraint and personal degradation. Skill is required to ensure that all of

these things occur in a way that is safe for all participants, while maintaining the risk and challenge to the experience (Newmahr 317). The skill requirement is one of the key distinguishing features for BDSM as a subculture compared to BDSM as a sexual deviation or alternative for people who identify with mainstream sexualities. The modern BDSM subculture is composed of a social network of participants, various merchants who specialize in the tools of the culture and organizations who manage annual events and other educational and social functions for the community (Newmahr 318-319).

### *Symbolic Appropriation of Masculinity*

One of the clearest methods for observing gay appropriation of heterosexual masculinity is in the fetishization of the symbols and artifacts. The wearing of leather by gay men in the 1950s in an attempt to present a more masculine identity does not fall into this sort of situation. That particular phenomenon was driven by gay men seeking to revoke a feminized stigma. The fetishization of masculinity is concerned with taking symbols of masculinity and eroticizing them. Non-sexual symbols of masculinity and masculine power are used in sexual situations or for sexual gratification. Fetishes are divided into two categories, form and media. Fetishes of form sexualize a particular type of object such as boots, sports equipment and uniforms. Media fetishes on the other hand sexualize certain materials such as leather, rubber and steel (Gebhard 71). The objects and materials that are fetishized are typically those that are associated with hyper-masculinity such as military uniforms, leather boots and motorcycles (Levine 95). The fetishization of hyper-masculine artifacts maintains the power of the masculine gender performance, but it changes the sexual relationship between heterosexual men and the gay men

that appropriate their symbols. The fetish reinforces masculine power by acknowledging that the symbols and the identities they represent are desirable. This also indicates that heterosexual men, either symbolically or directly, are being considered as sexual objects by gay men. The sexual fetish is the component of gay masculinity that allows sadomasochism and other elements of BDSM to assimilate heteronormative masculine identities and reproduce them in their own sexuality (Lowenstein 135).

The fetishization of masculinity is able to occur through what is culturally presented as masculinity (Stratton 119). As the cultural definition of masculinity changes, the shape and form of the fetish changes as well. Existing research has shown that in a survey of styles in 1967 and again in 2007 there was a distinct correlation between the fetishized styles and the styles that were accepted as masculine in mainstream culture at the time. The research focused on the feminization of sneakers and masculinity of boots in the 1960s and the subsequent change in attitudes by 2007 (Scott 152). While some of the stereotypes associated with anti-sneaker culture of the 1960s remains in modern gay culture, there is a sneaker fetish subculture that treats sneakers and athletic footwear as a central figure of their sexuality. The sneaker fetish subculture embraces sneakers as a symbol of masculinity (Weinberg, Williams and Calhan 614). The longitudinal study states strongly in its results that such a subculture did not exist in the 1960s and that it was not until the 1980s when sneakers became fashionable for men that the sneaker fetish emerged (Scott 160). In the 2007 survey of masculine culture what is revealed is that the jock and jock 'clone' masculinities that emerged in the 1980s had almost entirely replaced working-class identities as the hegemonic ideal masculinity. A similar shift is shown in the masculinized gay fetishes (Scott 164).

As an example of the investment of fetish in masculinity, I would like to consider some of the cultural elements that have emerged on the Internet for the sadomasochist community that contain elements of fetish. One of the longest surviving websites that provides erotic content for men interested in such commodification of fetishes of masculinity, BootLust.com, has a provocative tag-line that summarizes the type of content they offer and the audience they serve:

“If he's a cop, cowboy, leather clad biker, construction worker, mounted trooper, or an SS prick in uniform....if he's flirting, fighting, knocked out cold, tied up, chained down, hosed off, givin' or getting boot service....if he's doing it booted, HE'S HERE!” (Perfect Faces Imaging)

The tag-line enumerates several types of hyper-masculine identities, and then specifies a variety of ways in which those men may be portrayed, but emphasizes the concept of the men appearing in boots, which has a particularly strong attachment to masculinity. The content of the website is targeted at men who have a fetish for certain types of hyper-masculine roles, such as cowboys, construction workers, bikers and police. The models that portray these roles in the website's content are muscular and adopt aggressive demeanors for their characters, exhibiting a performance of the stereotypical role for those types of men. This performance is similar to the parody or drag that is described by Judith Butler (Butler loc2341). While this performance does not seek to be subversive of culturally ascribed gender identifications, as it is actually reinforcement, it does attempt to subvert the cultural masculine identity by integrating it into the gay sexual script. In this performance the symbols and artifacts, primarily the boots and uniform, are used as a direct link to specific types of hyper-masculine roles (Perfect Faces Imaging).

In some instances the objects themselves become the focus of erotic attention. The tag-line for the Boot Lust website refers to “boot service.” In the content of the website it is revealed that this means the boots are licked, rubbed or masturbated with by other men, some of whom

may also be in uniform, but that is not presented as a direct pre-requisite for this style of interaction. In the licking and rubbing of the boots, whether physically attached to the men or not, the fetishist becomes aroused (Perfect Faces Imaging). It is assumed by previous literature that this arousal and desire for the object is due to the desire for the gender performance of the person whom the object is usually associated, this is referred to as substitution (Gebhard 72).

Another aspect of the casting of hyper-masculine symbols as objects of fetish desire is that it allows for masculine performance in the form of role play during sexual situations (Kamel 173-174). Role playing involves the enacting of an identity separate from that of the actor for the purpose of sexual arousal. In gay sadomasochism these roles rely on the masculine erotic script, which essentially involves the emulation of the types of power relationships that men use in sexual encounters. Fetish is constructed as a one-way attraction, the attraction of the fetishist toward the object. Role-playing utilizes a two-way attraction. The fetishized elements of masculinity, such as uniforms, boots or sports equipment, are worn by the role-play participants. The substitute desire of fetish is then redirected from the objects to the particular role that each of the participants has adopted (Lewis loc4206).

The roles portrayed do not rely on any “real” portrayal of masculinity, only the interpretation of stereotypes (Levine 95-96). In this way role playing is a reflection of the concept that Judith Butler describes as performativity. The role play in itself is a single performance, but it does not represent a performance of a single identity, but a repetition of the collective social understanding of masculinity (Butler loc118). The role playing itself also highlights Butler’s key point that gender is not an internal essence, but is instead a sustained set of acts (Butler loc120). For the roles to be performed in such a way to emulate masculinity the gender itself must be a performance, otherwise the essential characteristics of the gender identity

of the actor himself would need to be suppressed. If gender were natural it should not be possible for it to be suppressed or changed in such a way, but just as in drag the individual's own gender identity is set aside in favor of the new role (Butler loc230).

### *Enacting Masculine and Homosocial Behavior*

Dominance and submission relationships are common in sadomasochism and are often interpreted as being synonymous with sadomasochism (Kamel 173; Newmahr 320). These relationships can also extend the masculine interpretation of role-play scenarios. While role-playing places each participant in a distinct masculine role, the power dynamic is somewhat even. While one participant may be more aggressive, there is not necessarily one that is "in control" in all role-playing encounters. In dominance and submission relationships the objective of the relationship is to engage in some type of eroticization of masculine power (Landridge and Butt 68).

The control aspect of a dominance and submission (D/s) relationship in sadomasochism is an expression of not only domination, aggression and control traits of masculinity but also a way to explore the risk taking and thrill seeking aspects of masculinity as well. While the dominant partner (sadist) is exercising masculinity in the obvious ways of taking control and enforcing his own masculinity, the submissive partner (masochist) is expressing masculinity in a less obvious way through seeking to be challenged and to take a risk. A blogger in the BDSM community has termed the moment of transition from relating as equals to entering separate dominant and submissive roles as the "butterfly moment." The moment is identified as being the most exciting as it is the climax of the anticipation and is the moment when the submissive

partner gives up control and enters a situation of risk (Fossil9). The risk of the situation can be enhanced by the implementation of game-like activities that determine what happens to the submissive and what the duration of the scene will be (Fossil9). The dominant partner expresses masculinity by taking control, whereas the submissive partner expresses masculinity by accepting the challenge of the dominant or asking to be challenged.

The normative masculine activity that is most comparable to sadomasochism is sport (Weinberg, Williams and Moser 380). Sport is an essential component of masculinity that often involves risks and physical contact between men. The dangers in sport are not all encountered in the course of practicing and playing, but also in the homo-social interaction with teammates (Kimmel 84). The brutality between teammates, especially to rookies is considered to be a normal component of masculinity and the process of socializing masculine traits. One such method for implementing brutality between teammates is with hazing rituals, which similar to sadomasochism are voluntary and consensual (Kimmel 83). The comparison of sadomasochism to sport is not in itself important for the consideration of gay sadomasochism as a hyper-masculine performance, but the culture surrounding it reflects the key components of homosociality which are important for hyper-masculine performance in sadomasochism.

Michael Kimmel addresses the many abuses between men, including humiliating and sexually degrading hazing rituals, homophobic harassment of new group members and sexist discourse (Kimmel 13). In gay sadomasochism these elements are replicated, although somewhat differently. Masochists are often subjected to verbal humiliation such as name calling or physical humiliation such as being forced to wear a collar or consume the sadist's urine (Kamel 175). Similar to Guyland, fag discourse is used in sadomasochism as well. The implementation is somewhat different in the context of gay sexuality than in straight masculinity. In straight

masculinity fag discourse is used for correcting infractions against masculinity and to encourage a corrective action, such as a hyper-masculine display (Pascoe 320). In gay sadomasochism fag discourse is used as a method of humiliation to establish a hierarchy between men. In the context of a sadomasochist scene the “fag” title can either be rejected by a hyper-masculine display or it can be endured as a component of the abuse. In the normative use of fag discourse the term “faggot” is taken lightly and is used only for sanctions, but gay men take the term more seriously and it is a more serious form of humiliation and disparagement, perhaps because it is possible for it to be internalized as an identity (Pascoe 320; Tied Feet Guy). The power relation between straight and gay sadomasochist uses of fag discourse is nearly identical. In both situations the receiver of the label is being challenged with a degraded masculine identity and the person assigning the label is attempting to elevate their own masculinity.

The purpose of hazing, homoerotic displays between men and homophobic behaviors in hegemonic masculinity is to encourage a non-emotional sense of bonding between men (Kimmel 125). Emotional displays are just as unacceptable in gay sadomasochism as in straight masculinity. The emotional aspect that is normally found in gay sexuality is substituted for other forms of intimacy, such as those found in normative male bonding rituals (Kamel 183). There are exceptions in normative masculinity to the lack of emotion and intimacy, such as in situations of pain that are associated with risk taking or sport and when in an altered psychological state such as being under the influence of alcohol (Messner 81). For gay men engaging in sadomasochism the exceptions are when enduring the pain of the sadomasochistic acts or after an orgasm in a sexual sadomasochistic scene (Kamel 183). Due to the pain and intense physical and psychological stresses that can be created through sadomasochism, emotional expression is

allowed, and in some cases expected during or at the conclusion of such an experience (Weinberg, Williams and Moser 384).

### *Consent in Sadomasochism*

The motto of the organized branches of the BDSM community is “safe, sane and consensual.” This motto functions as the community’s leading rule. It not only attempts to ensure the safety of all participants, but also to set apart the consensual BDSM community from individuals who have desires for engaging in non-consensual bondage and domination (Weiss 243). Strict rules for consent violate the sexist attitudes of masculinity and diminish the risk involved in sadomasochistic encounters (Kimmel 219).

Due to the role playing and other forms of performance involved in sadomasochism, it is not practical to use words like “no” to state non-consent and therefore other methods must be used to indicate non-consent. For most people who practice sadomasochism this is done through safe words. Safe words are words that would not typically be spoken during a scene, and as such indicate a conscious choice to terminate the encounter. Individuals often select their own safe words, or safe phrases, but some BDSM communities have adopted the words “red” and “yellow” as universal safe words. “Red” indicates a desire to stop entirely, whereas “yellow” indicates more uncertainty, but a desire for a break (Weinberg, Williams and Moser 385). The difficulty with safe words in a masculinized space is that to utilize them indicates yielding to the situation and admitting that the situation as it is cannot be handled. In essence, the masochist is admitting that he has been defeated and cannot handle the upper limit that was set for the scene (Kamel 188). Exiting a scene by the use of a safe word seems to be one of the few activities

which can degrade a masculine identity in sadomasochism; however, ignoring the use of a safe word is a greater infraction in the views of the organized BDSM communities (Weinberg, Williams and Moser 386). Not all participants in sadomasochism use safe words and consent is a more delicate construction. While the masculine identity can be protected in this way, it leaves safety in the hands of the sadist, who may or not have adequate experience to determine when a scene should be terminated for the safety of the masochist (Weinberg, Williams and Moser 385).

The other major concept in consent for the sadomasochism is limits. Limits are pre-arranged or agreed barriers beyond which the masochist does not consent to experiencing (Weinberg, Williams and Moser 381). Whereas safe words are almost always honored, but are almost never used, limits are often reached, but they are not always honored. The practice of knowingly violating limits of a masochist by a sadist, but doing so responsibly is referred to as “pushing limits” (Weinberg, Williams and Moser 386). The practice of pushing limits is a violation of consent, but due to the nature of sadomasochism and its emotional objectives, the violation is not always unwelcome (Kamel 188). The assumption of a hyper-masculine image or an increased sense of confidence as a result of dominating a masochist can lead to a state of arrogance that results in ignoring the limits in a careless way that is an act of showmanship for the dominant participant but places the submissive participant in more danger (Kamel 185).

The arrogant disregard for limits that some dominant participants show and the stigma of a man who uses a safe word as being a “sissy” is a cultural problem for gay sadomasochism as a result of its relationship with masculinity. The accepted practice of “pushing limits” can be beneficial to the growth of a masochist but is generally problematic as it leaves the community with no clear lines of consent.

## Conclusion

Hyper-masculinity is performed in gay sadomasochism through the appropriation of culturally elements of masculinity such as clothing and other physical artifacts which are symbolically linked to the masculine identity and through masculine actions. Replications of homo-social behaviors similar to hazing rituals are embraced as masculine behaviors and are eroticized in concert with the performance of masculine roles. While the hyper-masculine performance in gay sexuality through sadomasochistic styles allows gay men to pass in hegemonic society, it also suffers from similar problems such as non-consensual sexual aggression. Regardless of the positive or negative implications of adopting a hyper-masculine performance, gay sadomasochism integrates gay men into heterosexual masculinity and symbolically integrates heterosexual masculinity into gay sexuality.

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