Does Tribute Belong in the Lifestyle
A Comparative Study of Lifestyle and Professional Dominatrices

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Abstract

This study is a qualitative study to analyze the similarities and differences between lifestyle dominatrices and professional dominatrices. Three professional dominatrices and three lifestyle dominatrices were interviewed one on one as part of this study, as well as data from three blogs for each type of dominatrix. These two types of dominatrices were compared on how they view the other type of dominatrix and tribute (money and gifts). The lifestyles are split between those who accept professionals and those who do not. There is also a belief, held by lifestyles, that professionals are not genuinely interested in BDSM because they are being paid to do it. However, a some of the professionals would consider themselves lifestyles as well, because they practice BDSM with subservices who are not clients. When it comes to tribute professionals of course accept it, but there is a split between lifestyles. Some lifestyles do not accept tribute and then there are some lifestyles who accept and expect tribute from subservices. The purpose of this study is to expand our understanding of lifestyle and professional dominatrices. This study has been approved by IU’s Institutional Review Board.

This poster reports on preliminary findings from one component of this project

Review of Literature

I use a few different Sociological theories as the basis for my research questions and as a guide for the creation of my interview questions as well. Social Constructionism describes how reality is constructed through categories and guidelines that have been implemented by society as truth (Boswell 1969; Delamater and Shibley 1998). I used Social Constructionism theory as the basis for my interview questions that had to do with how they create generalized opinions they apply to each other. I also used Exchange Theory and Gift Exchange Theory, which describes actions that are contingent on rewards between two or more people (Emerson 1976). This theory was the basis for the interview questions that were focused on tribute.

More theories were used in the larger project for the other research questions that will not be covered in this poster. Message boards were also looked at to provide literature that this conflict does exist online.

This research aimed to fill this gap in the literature on BDSM and to explore if there is a conflict in the BDSM community and not just online.

Research Questions

1.) Do Lifestyle and Professional dominatrices dislike each other in real life?

2.) Do Lifestyles accept Tribute?

3.) If so what kinds of Tribute do they accept?

Methods

Research Design:
Qualitative, one on one, semi-structured interviews of three lifestyle dominatrices and three professional dominatrices. Interviews lasted 30 minutes to an hour and a half. Lifestyles were asked at least 27 questions and professionals were asked at least 25 questions. Blog data was collected from three and three as well. Interview questions were used to find data in the blogs. Blogs had to answer at least 14 of the interview questions and been updated in the past five years to be included.

Participants and Recruitment:
Participants had to be female over the age of 18 years old and identify as dominant in BDSM. Women had to identify as either lifestyle or professional. Snowball sampling was used to find participants. I went to events in the BDSM community to find participants and then had many suggested to me through other people in attendance at these events. These liaisons talked to dominatrices for me and had them contact me if they were interested in participating.

Analyses:
Content analysis was used to find themes in the data.

Preliminary Results

Sample Characteristics (N=6)
100% White
Age: late 20s-late 50s
Relationship Status: 1 is single 4 are in a relationship of some kind: 2 married and 2 who are polyamorous
Sexual Orientation: 2 Queer, 2 Bisexual, 1 Pansexual

There were also 6 blogs used as well that did not provide this information

Results from Lifestyles

Opinions on Professionals:
• Many lifestyles stated that they believed that professionals had an attitude and that they were only doing BDSM to get stuff.
• Lifestyles also believed that professionals do “provide a service”, but only a few stated that they respected them and what they do.

Tribute:
• All lifestyles wanted their subs to have their own toys for various reasons (hygiene and knowing it is what they like)
• All lifestyles have accepted gifts (freely given not an exchange) at some point from subservices, but only about half accept tribute and the other half do not accept tribute.
• Those who do not accept tribute find it to be exploitation
• Those who do accept it often get corslets, toys, panties, heels and then want skilled services from subs (taxi, accounting help, writing help).

Results from Professionals

Opinions on Lifestyles:
• Half stated they were lifestyles as well as pros, those who worked in a dungeon said they were not lifestyle only pros.
• All are okay with lifestyles, but those who do not identify as lifestyle too stated it is because it is an all the time commitment.

Hostility from Lifestyles:
• Many mentioned having experienced hostility from lifestyles in some form
• Common places to experience it is on the internet or face-to-face
• They have been called sex workers and told they are not genuinely interested in BDSM.

All of the Professionals in the study are genuinely interested in BDSM and accept tribute as well.

Quotes of Opinions and Hostility

All they are after is people to give them things
(Cecily, Lifestyle)

[trying to be lifestyle] it was very time consuming… I was very drained
(Kate, Professional)

If you tried to say there is a need for pro doms in this lifestyle they would say “you just cheapen it. You’re a sex worker.”
(Rachel, Professional)

Definitions

BDSM: Bondage, Domination, Sadomasochism

Dominatrices- Women who are in the dominant role in BDSM

Submissive- The person who submits to the dominant partner

Lifestyle- A person who does not take money to perform BDSM acts.

Professional- A person who does take money to perform BDSM acts

Tribute- Money or gifts in exchange for BDSM acts

Select References


