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Fifty Shades of Fetishes

An exploration into kinks, fetishes and where they come from

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The Spectrum

BDSM, a kinky form of rough sex involving a dominant and a submissive, is growing in popularity and gaining acceptance in main-stream media with

Brittney is turned on by the sound of urine falling into a toilet.

It's one of her kinks.

Lorna Loster has been tying men up since she was 14 years old.

It's her fetish.

A fetish is something one needs in order to have a fulfilling sexual experience while a kink is just something sexual one enjoys.

Although sometimes thought of as taboo or uncommon, 23.5 percent of UB students admitted to having some sort of kink or fetish including

the release of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Some students, however, still struggle to accept their own kinks or fetishes. Yusong Shi, *The Spectrum*

spanking, public sex, feet and bondage in *The Spectrum's* sex survey.

Brittney, whose name has been changed for her privacy, is aroused by urine-related activities. This kink is also defined as urolangi, or "watersports," including watching people urinate, getting urinated on – a "golden shower" – or watching people wet themselves.

This is only one of countless fetishes and kinks people could have. Some are more common, like a foot or spanking fetish, while others are less common and even illegal, like erotophonophilia, arousal from killing someone, or bestiality, the desire to have intercourse with an animal.

Bondage, however, is a fetish that has recently grown in popularity and acceptance. In 2010, the American Psychiatric Association announced it would change the diagnostic codes for fetishism and BDSM – overlapping abbreviation of bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism – in the next edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM).

The new definitions will have a distinction between behavior and pathology, meaning consenting adults will no longer be considered mentally ill for being a sexual minority.

The "Fifty Shades of Grey" phenomenon - although looked at by members of the BDSM community as unrealistic, exaggerated and unsafe - is also helping to alleviate the stigmas surrounding the BDSM community. But some students still struggle to accept their kinks and fetishes, though they may not be as uncommon as people think.

New York is ranked 28 in amount of BDSM searches on Pornhub.com, the largest porn website on the Internet. This includes the words "punish," "bondage" and accounts for 1.2 percent of all Pornhub searches.

Loster, owner of local sex shop Four Beauties near South Campus, is a dominatrix and breast fetish model. The 28-year-old gets paid to stand in front of a video camera and jump around, shake her shoulders and play with her size 36M breasts.

But her real enjoyment comes from wearing fishnet stockings, heels and a corset as she assumes the role of a dominatrix; whether it's as a model or in her everyday life, she loves being in control.

"It's my lifestyle and it's in me, I have to do it," she said.

But it's not about the sex for the dominatrix. She's more into "having all the power."

In a typical BDSM scenario there are two roles: dominant and submissive.

A dominant figure, like Loster, has the power in the situation whereas the submissive has given up the power, according to Dan, a BDSM expert who has been educating people about the sex subculture for three years. Dan doesn't reveal his last name but goes by his nickname Frozen Meursault in the BDSM community.

As a dominatrix, Loster spansks, ties up and disciplines men who ask for it. She currently has relations with five submissive men in what she calls "her stable."

Just because someone is playing a dominant role, however, doesn't mean he or she is getting all of the pleasure – that's for the bottom. The top is the person giving the sensations and the bottom is the person receiving them, according to Dan.

Joshua, a junior at UB whose name has been changed to protect his privacy, loves to submit to other guys and identifies as a bottom.

"I have this natural attraction to power, physical and otherwise," he said. "So once I find power, I want that around and I will make sure he knows he's taken care of."

This means he would rather give a blowjob than receive one and he will only be the receiver in penetrative sex. He said this is what has led him to his kinks of getting choked and having his hair pulled during sex.

Where do they come from?

Fetishes, kinks and paraphilia – illegal fetishes and kinks – usually develop in the adolescent stage of growth through associative networks, according to Lance Rintamaki, UB's sex communication professor.

This means the brain links something often not associated with sex, like feet or urine, to feelings of arousal. It's unknown why this occurs and it's unavoidable for some people, Rintamaki said.

"When someone develops a fetish or a kink or a paraphilia, it's not under their control and it's not their fault," he said.

Brittney, who also enjoys looking at women's feet, acknowledged her urolangi kink when she was in high school.

"I saw people wet themselves and something about seeing them almost make it to the restroom got me excited and nervous," she said.

Loster was 11 when she recognized her fetish.

She accidentally saw an episode of an HBO documentary show, "Real Sex" and it sparked her curiosity. She started researching the kinky sex she saw. By the time she was 14 years old, she started teaching herself and experimenting with tying people up and other domineering acts like making the boys in her class carry her books.

"I've always had that controlling nature," Loster said. "It's weird because with my friends who aren't in the lifestyle, they can't really read that off of me. But once I find out you're into the lifestyle, it all comes out."

It wasn't until she was 17 that she considered herself "serious about being a dominatrix" and got involved with dom-sub relationships.

Dan was introduced to the lifestyle through a girlfriend he had when he was 17. When his girlfriend told him she was into BDSM, he was unsure of what his role would be. After his first experience, he actively sought information about rough body play, including punching, slapping and choking.

At first he said he tried to "compartmentalize" his desires by looking for a "vanilla girlfriend" – someone who isn't in the BDSM community – while also looking to fit in his kinkier interests on the side. It wasn't until he accepted "this is a part of who I am" that he fully immersed himself into the lifestyle.

Throughout his exploration, Dan became aware of the three consent rules of the kink and fetishism community.

- Informed consent: people know the risks of what they are consenting to
- Enthusiastic consent: people shouldn't be coerced into doing anything they are uncomfortable with
- On-going consent: occurs throughout an activity to ensure people don't feel pressure to continue an activity if they don't want to

As a dominatrix, Loster ensures her submissives are aware of all three types of consent and she also always participates in "after care."

"If you do anything that seems abusive you have to do [after care]," she said. "People are in disarray sometimes and you need to make sure their minds are back in order and they acknowledge it's play and not reality."

Acceptance

For a long time, Dan described himself as "in the closet" about his rough body play fetish.

"On some level there is a component of 'it's just a sexual activity' and some would argue that it's not the same as accepting who you love," Dan said. "But for me, my relationships have a power exchange and I'm polyamorous and so I have more than one partner that I care about, so in a lot of ways it is [like coming out of the closet]."

Joshua disagrees with that comparison. He said kinks and fetishes are something that can be kept in the bedroom, and therefore is nobody else's business.

But he does think it's important to be vocal with sexual partners about what he likes. To encourage sexual partners to participate in rough sex involving choking and hair pulling, he guides his partner's hands around his own neck and into his hair to subtly let him know what he wants.

"Just cause I'm a bottom doesn't mean I can't be a little bossy," he said. "If they don't like what they're doing they'll move their hands back."

Brittney has talked to her boyfriend about her interest in urolangi and although she hasn't experienced her kink yet, he is open to trying watersports with her. It took her a long time to accept her fascination with urine.

She struggled with shame, guilt, disgust and denial over her kinks and is slowly starting to accept them. Her boyfriend has helped her come to terms with them and realize they are just "sexual preferences and interests."

She advises other people to accept their kinks and fetishes without needing the approval of others.

"It does not make you a freak or abnormal," Brittney said. "We all have our different preferences and turn-ons and the longer you try to deny it, the more difficult it will become to think or engage in sex."

She joined online communities to help her embrace her kink and encourages other people to do the same.

"Odds are there is somebody else who is into what you're into," Dan said. "It's highly unlikely that you invented a fetish. Most people aren't that creative."

There is a stigma surrounding kinks and fetishes but Dan said there's no reason for people to be ashamed of what makes them happy.

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