

Thoughts & Reflections On Being A Dominant Woman

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Allowing for the free forum of our discussion today, I am presenting this paper to you in a non – academic manner. As a result, personal opinion and experience will abound within. I have taken into account the sensitive nature of our discussion topic today and am hoping to achieve with this short paper your increased understanding of this issue. Bondage & Dominance /Sadomasochism &Masochism commonly referred to in our culture as BDSM has been regarded as a taboo topic for open discussion. However, more and more lately you see it popping up in lecture series, classes' syllabi and round table discussions. Why? Why now? Is our society finally ready to open the closet door and let out one of our darkest skeletons? I can only hope so.

Let's begin with why I am not a dominant woman. Many misconceptions are attributed to dominatrixes, dominas, dommes or dominant women (from here on in referred to as dommes.) Some of the popular ones I have been confronted with are:

You hate men and like to hurt them.

You are a lesbian venting your anger on the male sex.

It's a way to prove women are the stronger sex.

You were abused as a child (by either parent) and this is your way of coping.

You were raised by an overly aggressive mother and weakling father; or vice versa and are now compensating.

While I admit there are those in this lifestyle who have these reasons, I am not one. I will go into detail later on about my personal reasons. Besides it being my chosen form of sexual expression, it is also my chosen career. I am a professional domina, sex educator and lecturer. But for now, let's touch on feminism. You would think being a dominant woman goes hand in hand with feminism. Those reasons stated above are just a few of why being a feminist and a dominant make it difficult. People don't want to hear that a strong woman can actually enjoy the pleasure she receives from controlling men. That I enjoy the activities I partake in. She must be a card carrying militant feminist! They don't want to accept that she is well adjusted, in a happy marriage, from a good home and not abused as a child. It is difficult for many people to accept that anyone would desire to explore an alternative sexuality without being encumbered by heavy issues. Similar to porn stars, many women in the BDSM community are exposed to continual harassment from people for participating in such a deviant practice. Being the dominant women, I should be upholding the feminist creed of no subordination/subjugation by controlling these men. I am the stronger sex in my lifestyle. I am not subjected to domination of men in my lifestyle. It is easier for me than my submissive sisters who must deal with all the negative connotations of domestic violence and psychical abuse. A submissive woman could not possibly be a feminist if she lets men control her and psychically manipulate her. How could she willingly place herself in the subordinate position, under a male? Consider for a moment, the immense amount of inner strength a submissive woman must have to put her in that position against all current social constructs. She must truly know her inner desires and have the strength to pursue them regardless of how others might react to her. Much like our foremothers who pursued suffrage.

Along with BDSM as a sexual activity may come social activism, community awareness and political lobbying. These are all goals the original feminists strove for in the Suffrage movement. It was not simply enough to obtain our right to vote. The bigger goal was complete social reform. Suffragists were concerned with all aspects of society from the social to the moral. They sought to bring about the change of society by upholding its most valued principles: honesty, humility, charity and selflessness. I know a fellow dominant woman who is currently using her leather woman title to actively support the HIV clinical trial studies. Another friend uses her voice to petition all women to have mammograms. Many leather groups actively petition for overall GLBT Rights. Personally, I use my platform to increase awareness about domestic violence within our community and GLBT relationships. If this is not continuing the founding mother's feminist principles, I do not know what is. To further explore the feminism connection, the ability to express ourselves however we desire in our sexual lives stems directly from the feminist bra burning fights in the Seventies. These women fought hard for the right to enjoy sex, have an orgasm and stand up and say: 'We like sex, we want sex and we are not ashamed of it!' How we devalue their efforts by now saying to other women that they can only enjoy sex how we as a whole group feel is acceptable. We should be ashamed of ourselves!

One of our common Leather community principles states that all safe, sane and consensual activities are accepted. The keyword here is consensual. BDSM is about empowering people, especially women, to explore their sexuality in a safe context. We have set community standards for those interested to follow when they first enter the BDSM world. There are BDSM safe houses for those who are in abusive relations and desire to leave them. BDSM educators across the nation seek to inform the general populace about the reality of our lifestyle.

Repression of our sexual desires has been shown to do more harm to our psyche than expressing them safely with those who we love (Social Psychology, Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2002). Freedom of choice is one of the major tenets we base our country on. This right should be extended to those who practice alternative sexualities safely.

Now to the reasons I am a dominant woman active in BDSM.

I love men and women. I enjoy their reactions to the activities I administer upon them.

The power exchange between active parties in a scene is beyond explanation. It is a much more spiritual bond than I have encountered in my non-BDSM relationships.

The people in the community I have met are extremely intelligent, honest and moral. I enjoy having such people in my life.

Freedom of expression. It enables me to utilize some of my creative juices on a regular basis.

Professionally, I am fulfilled by assisting those who come to see me express their fetishes safely in a controlled environment. I do not partake in sexual exchange with my clients. Among my clients I have married men and women who can not otherwise express their BDSM. I also have elderly and handicapped clients who are uncomfortable with public display or desire the safety of a professional. I have women who have submissive desires and are more comfortable with a woman domina than a male master.

Those are my reasons for being a dominant woman in the BDSM lifestyle. They are not everyone's reasons. Power does come into play. I will not deny I enjoy my power over the male sex. But it is not solely my reason. Other women I know have used it as a tool for such empowerment. I feel it can be a great healing tool for women dealing with all types of psychological issues.

I hope my thoughts here have given you some insight into our world. Many of the issues raised within this paper bear further exploration and research. I hope to continue my growth within this context and develop a sound body of work to help our society better understand females involved in BDSM.

Suggested Readings/References

Feminist Perspectives on Ethics by Elisabeth Porter. Longman Press. 1999.

Living with Contradictions: Controversies in Feminist Social Ethics. Edited by Alison Jaggar. Westview Press. Boulder, Colorado. 1994.

"Nagging" Questions: Feminist Ethics in Everyday Life, edited by Dana Bushnell. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. Boston, Maryland. 1995.

Sex, Power & Pleasure. By Mariana Valverde.

New Society Publishers. Philadelphia, Pittsburgh. 1987.

Sexually Aggressive Women: Current perspectives and Controversies. Edited by Peter Anderson and Cindy Struckman-Johnson. The Guilford Press. New York, New York. 1998.