

Events are Bound to Happen, Spank You Very Much: the Importance of Munch Events in the BDSM Community

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Abstract

The kinkster/BDSM community is a sexual minority that largely operates underground. Although not linked directly with the sexual practices of the community, the prevailing social institution of the subculture is the *munch*, social gatherings in which no “kink” activities take place. In this research, we analyze data from two international surveys, one of munch organizers and one of munch participants. The findings show the lifestyle and demographic variables that are linked with placing importance upon the institution of the munch. One major finding from the research is that munch participants to be most strongly motivated with a desire to socialize, rather than looking for partners for sexual experiences, although these two motivations are not mutually exclusive. In addition, we see that for both organizers and participants in munches, the more years in the lifestyle, the less importance organizers and participants place on the munch for their involvement in the lifestyle.

Keywords: munch, events, BDSM, diversity, fetish, kink, bondage

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Introduction

There are many practicing non-conventional sexualities in different countries. One of the prevailing social institutions of those who are part of the non-conventional world of sexuality is the event called the “munch.” The munch is a social event in which no sexual exchanges take place but often occur in plain sight in restaurants and bars throughout the world. As the event is common and is a central part of the social scene of some sexual minorities, it is worthy of study as an event. An event that is critical for the subculture of kink/BDSM and has some attributes that are also found in other events held by other groups.

Human sexuality is a complex and sophisticated thing. While mainstream sexual practices may change over time and be different from one social group to another, there are those who partake in practices that deviate from what most people consider conventional in terms of sexual practices and social relationships. The world is changing as are those sexual practices and lifestyles that just a few years ago were seen as taboo or obscure. It was only in 1989 that Denmark legally recognized same-sex marriages but now more than two dozen countries permit or sanction this (Pew, 2017a). Now, in many developed countries, same-sex marriage is recognized and accepted as a mainstream lifestyle choice and is no longer something that seems so outlandish that the mention of it is received with chuckles. There has been a remarkable shift in public opinion in many developed countries on this. For example, in the USA, the Pew Research Center began studying US public opinion of same sex marriage in 2001. At that time, only a minority of Americans were in favor of it, while the most recent research illustrates that a clear majority (61%) supports it (Pew, 2017b)

There are other sexual practices and minorities that are still somewhat in the shadows and do not yet operate as openly as many members of the LGBT+ community. While there is a liberalization of many sexual mores in more developed countries, there are still some groups that have to operate largely underground. These underground events may teach us about how events create and sustaining a sense of community in a world that seems to be unaccepting of a community/lifestyle.

The umbrella term typically used to describe sexual practices that are not conventional is “kink” and the related concept of “BDSM.” The “conventional” is a moving target that will differ from society to society and will evolve over time. Kink is an umbrella term that refers to practices that are not considered mainstream, generally. BDSM is a reference to Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, and Sadism and Masochism, although also an umbrella term, it refers to practices that are simply not typical of common socially-acceptable sexual or romantic practices and usually implies focusing upon power relations/authority in sexual relations. The umbrella terms are used to reference a breadth of practices and includes such interests as foot fetishes, power exchanges, medical play, pegging (receiving anal sex with a strap-on dildo), footjobs, enforced chastity, forms of orgasm control, bondage/shibari, corporal punishment, and many other practices.

Those who are involved in the BDSM lifestyle/community often refer to themselves as “kinksters,” indicating a penchant for the kinky. What is “kinky” is an entire discussion that will differ from society to society and is dependent merely on what is commonly held by the society to be socially-acceptable/mainstream in sexual and romantic practices. While there is a sense

among BDSM practitioners that there is variety in terms of interests and practices, there is a general notion of a sense of community among the group. Self-described “kinksters” hold events of different types, generally divided into the dichotomy of non-play or play events. Play events are those in which BDSM activities take place while non-play events are social events or educational events in which no BDSM activities occur. There may be some events in a gray area in which some BDSM activities may take place, although the general intention of the event is to socialize, introduce those interested in BDSM to the community/lifestyle, and generally establish a sense of fellowship among those participating at the event. The gray area may be a much in which, for example, some mild BDSM/kink activities take place such as spanking or leading a partner on a dog leash.

The population that practices BDSM is likely sizable but it is hard to quantify, as there is a difference between those who do practices what may fall under the umbrella and those involved in the community socially. There is also likely a large population of people who do partake in BDSM practices but do not recognize it as falling under the terminology of a subculture/community/lifestyle. The quantification of the community is also confounded by the fact that many do not want to have it publicly known that they participate in things outside of the norm of mainstream sexuality. There are data that are suggestive that “kinky” sexual fantasies are quite common in the general population (Joyal et al. 2015; Joyal & Carpentier 2017), suggesting that “kink” practice or fantasies are much more common than many would acknowledge, making it seem that, although hidden and considered outside the realm of mainstream, such practices may be common. Joyal & Carpentier (2017), for example, in a survey of over 1,000 respondents in Quebec found that almost half of their respondents indicated that

they had fantasies that many would consider “kinky” and that about a third of respondents had taken part in “kinky” behaviors.

In an international survey, the condom company Durex surveyed populations in 41 countries, the results showed that about 5% of respondents had partaken in sadomasochistic sex, and that 20% had used things such as masks, blindfolds, or bondage in their private lives (Durex, 2005).

Unsurprisingly, the figures for participation in sadomasochistic sex and the use of masks and other accoutrements were not evenly spread out and some populations seem to have a penchant for the “kinky” more than others. In addition, an Australian study determined that about 1.8% of the Australians participated in practices that would be deemed BDSM practices by most (Richters et al., 2008), suggesting that nearly 2% of the population in a developed country could be considered part of the community, although the Durex (2005) survey suggests this figure is much higher. So while there may be some dispute as to what constitutes those involved in BDSM practices, it seems that the lower estimate of those involved is about two percent of the population.

The prevailing non-play meetup is the “munch.” Munches are events in which no BDSM activities occur but have the intention of enabling members of the community to socialize and introduce new members or curious people to the community. Munches occur throughout the world and sometimes other language is used to denote such concepts and their variations. The word “slosh,” for example is common in the Midwest of the USA and refers to a non-play event in which there are liquid refreshments. In the UK, there are events titled “liquid munches” or “kinky drinkies” to denote the same thing. In German-speaking countries, people enjoy a

“munch” or “BDSM-Stammtisch,” with the tacit understanding that a “munch” may entail meetups in which there may be some in attendance who do not speak German. Since it is international in scope, there are also some differences in cultural expectations from country to country. For example, Australian munch culture generally shuns the consumption of alcoholic drinks while the same is not true in the USA.

In terms of being involved in organized events, play events and non-play events (munches and other similar meetups) are common, even if not all those who partake in BDSM activities are part of the community that takes part in the events. Although it is almost impossible to measure the size of the BDSM community or the numbers who acknowledge that they are part of the BDSM lifestyle, some suggestive figures can be uncovered. For example, a Google search on to look into FetLife profiles (FetLife is the prevailing fetish social media), shows that there are over six million profiles, as of December 2017. Although many profiles may no longer be active, the figure suggests that this social media platform is used by many since its inception in 2008. There are other social media dedicated to BDSM such as Sklavenzentrale (a German language site) and Collarspace, while there are other websites and social media used to organize and disseminate information on munches and other events, including the very mainstream Facebook. Because of social media and because of the inclusion of BDSM, munches and similar events are not hard to find in almost any town or city in developed countries.

While these events are widespread and common, little is known about how individual participants and organizers value these events. The objective for this analysis is to look into how participants and organizers value the event, to uncover possible segments that place less value

upon these non-play events. To this, we delve into the literature on munches and related literature from event management. We then explain the methods used to learn from the BDSM community, analyze the data, and illustrate what the research has indicated to us about the munch and its importance in the BDSM community/lifestyle.

Literature Review

There is a substantial literature on topics linked with BDS, especially those who are interested in the psychology of sex. As a result, the prevailing literature on BDSM delves into the psychology of BDSM practitioners (see, for example, Ardill & O'Sullivan, 2005; Baumeister, 1997; Bauer 2008; Chaline, 2010; Connolly, 2006; Cross & Matheson, 2006; Dymock, 2012; Hébert & Weaver, 2014; Holt, 2016; Moser, 1988; Moser and Levitt, 1987; Nichols, 2006; Richters, et al., 2008; Sandnabba et al., 1999; Weinberg et al., 1984; Yost & Hunter, 2012). Within this literature, authors typically delve into topics such as the the psychology of pain, the norms of BDSM culture, sexual identity, and the general psychology of BDSM practitioners, among other things. Some of the most noteworthy findings include the findings illustrating that practitioners of BDSM seem to be well-adjusted and that the practices of BDSM are not associated with childhood trauma or other trauma (Lindemann, 2011; Richters et al., 2008; Wismeijer & van Assen, 2013) and that BDSM for most is simply a form of leisure (Newmahr, 2010).

While so much of the literature looks upon the psychology of BDSM, there is also literature that does not focus upon the psychological issues of BDSM. One of the most interesting aspects of BDSM is the need for many of its practitioners to hide their identity. As this is a critical aspect of involvement in the lifestyle/community, there is some literature that has dealt with the ways in which the community works to protect those who are a member of the community (Meeker,

2013; Bezreh et al., 2012; Weinberg 2006) and some that focus upon how BDSM networks work in terms of creating communities of practice and sharing information (Weinberg and Falk, 1980).

However, in terms of BDSM events, only three known published scholarly articles have referenced munches (Weiss 2006; Graham et al., 2016; Webster 2018). Weiss (2006) was the most direct and thorough in terms of dealing with the munch, mentioning the role of munch events in an analysis of the BDSM community in San Francisco based upon a small number of personal interviews. In an even more superficial manner, Graham et al. (2016) refer to a “munch” but without defining it as an institutions or referring to its importance in BSDM culture. Most recently, Webster (2018) described the concerns of munch organizers, based upon data from an online survey. The findings show that munch organizers make choices with regards to venues to encourage maximum involvement by participants and work in ways to ensure that munch rules are enforced. Although the munch is likely the most critical social institution of the BDSM institution and it is practiced globally, there is only the most superficial of references to it in the academic literature, likely because most researchers focus upon the psychology of BDSM rather than the social institutions or organizational methods of the subculture/community. Until recently, there was no noteworthy mention of the commercial potential of exploiting BDSM for commercial purposes. However, there seems to be a suggestion that BDSM now have the potential for being exploited more widely and commercially, as the practices become more widely accepted (Tomazos et al, 2017).

While there is little or no mention of BDSM culture in the literature on events, there is substantial literature focusing upon the motivations of participants for events (see, for example, Backman et al., 1995; Crompton & McKay, 1997; Formica & Murrmann, 1998; Gelder & Robinson, 2009; Gibson, 2004; Lee, et al., 2004; Mohr, et al., 1993; Piazzzi & Harris, 2016; Robinson & Gammon, 2004; Scott, 1996; Thrane, 2002; Wan & Chan, 2013) and literature that looks into events from the perspective of event managers (see, for example; Berridge, 2012; Gursoy et al., 2004). There is also a large literature delving into the role of volunteer organizers, generally showing that volunteers at events can influence participant motivation, continuing participant attendance, and satisfaction with events (Cho, 2007; Jargo & Deery, 2002). The literature shows that while the motivations of participants is a critical thing to investigate, the role of volunteers and volunteer organizers has an impact upon perceptions of those attending events. A separate and relevant literature is the literature investigating the role of events in creating and sustaining a sense of community (De Bres and Davis, 2001; Derrett, 2003; Kerwin et al., 2015; Legg & White, 2015; Obst et al., 2007; Piazzzi & Harris, 2016; Stone & Millan, 2011; van Winkel et al., 2014).

While there is very little written about munches and similar non-play events in the academic literature, there is substantial work on related issues of the perception of events from the perspective of attendees (see for example, Liu et al., 2017). This work using a triangulation methodology to determine more about perceptions of the volunteers who run events and those who participate in events, an approach similar to that taken by Kang et al. (2014). While it has been found that those that volunteer for and organize events centered around an ethno-cultural theme are largely motivated by the desire to maintain ties with their ethno-cultural group (Saleh

& Wood, 1998), we expect that munch organizers would be also largely be motivated by a dedication to their community/subculture/lifestyle. More critically, we need to investigate the attitudes, demographics, and other characteristics that would enable us to isolate what seems to influence organizers of BDSM events and participants in BDSM events in terms of their rating of the importance of the munch, the prevailing social institution of the BDSM community/subculture.

Since there is so little research done on munch participants and organizers, this investigation hopes to expand knowledge of BDSM and its events. Since there is an indication that BDSM has some potential for commercial exploitation, as its practices become more mainstream (Tomazos et al, 2017), this is the time to learn about how those in the BDSM lifestyle and organizers of munches view the importance of munches and similar events. Specifically, identifying how the event organizer and the customer (participant at the munch) value the institution of the munch in the ecosystem of the munch is critical, as there may be demographic, lifestyle and other characteristics that influence how organizers and participants value the munch. This should give substantial insight into how the munch, as an institution can be commercialized.

Methods

Two major online surveys were fielded to learn more about munches and similar non-play events. Online surveys were used for pragmatic reasons and to encourage an international sample. Since the BDSM community is international, an online survey would enable the researchers to gather data internationally in a cost-effective way. In addition, online surveys

enable respondents to reply to a survey in ways that would guarantee to protect the respondents' identity, thus protecting respondents and improving the quality and quantity of the data gathered. Two different surveys were fielded at two different times and were both met with approval by the lead researcher's Institutional Review Board. FetLife administration permitted the use of FetLife for the dissemination of the survey on their site.

The first survey was a survey of munch participants and the second was a survey of munch organizers. Both surveys were designed to be short to gather as much data and meaningful data as possible. The objective was to gather as much information as possible with regards to the munch and similar events as an exploratory survey, since so little is known about the munch as an institution. The intention was to make a thorough global survey of the munch to establish a baseline for future research on the institution of the munch and other similar non-play events of the kink/BDSM community. The surveys were designed in ways to be sensitive to the language and customs of the members of the BDSM community. In both cases, drafts of the survey questions were given to some people involved in the BDSM lifestyle/community to ensure that the language was respectful, intelligent, understandable, and meaningful. The input from people in the BDSM community/lifestyle was critical in ensuring that the survey was a success.

The survey of munch participants was fielded from January to April 2016, while the survey of munch organizers was made available from December 2016 to March 2017. While they were both online surveys using Qualtrics, they were fielded in somewhat different ways. While most of the respondents for the survey on munch participants were recruited on FetLife using posting in various groups, for the munch organizers survey, individuals who are likely organizers for

events were identified in FetLife and on online searches using Google. FetLife was used as the primary platform as it is the leading social media that connects those in the kinkster/BDSM community globally. Those who invited others to munches were presumed to be organizers and were sent invitations. The surveys were left open until an adequate amount of responses were received, as not to disturb community members more than needed in the collection of data. Data recruitment for the munch participant survey ended shortly after 1,000 responses were gathered and collection for the organizer survey ended shortly after 200 responses were gathered. The population to be gathered were those who had ever attended a munch (for the participant survey) and those who had ever organized a munch or similar event (for the organizer survey). Those who had never been to a munch or similar event or those who had never organized such an event were not included in the study.

Since the intention of the surveys was to learn about an international phenomenon and gather information from the international experience of munches, there was an intentional attempt to try to get responses from respondents across the globe. While there was no funding to enable the translation of the survey, the survey was disseminated only in English. There was an attempt to reach out to populations outside of Anglophone countries to have as much representation as possible from outside of English-speaking countries. This entailed inviting munch organizers outside of Anglophone countries, especially if their page was written in English, and posting in groups dedicated to munches in countries in which many people would likely speak English well enough to take a survey. In terms of ethics, in the collection of the data, there was no incentive given for involvement in the survey, there was no geo-tracking linked with responses, and there is no realistic way in which the responses to the survey could be linked with a particular

respondent. For the most part, the real names and identities of respondents are largely unknown, unless their real name was used on the internet and social media with regards to their involvement with the lifestyle/community (only a minority of those in the community do offer such self-identifying information on the internet and social media—perhaps to protect their identities but also, perhaps, to create mystique by using a “scene” name). While it is impossible to attain a “perfect” sample, the techniques used seemed to be appropriate, using the leading kinkster/BDSM social media to recruit respondents, as well as an attempt to recruit additional respondents using Google searches to find both organizers and munch participants.

The dependent variable in this analysis is the individual’s assessment of the importance of the munch and similar events for involvement in the lifestyle. A variation of this question was asked in both surveys. In the survey of munch participants, participants were asked “How important is attending a slosh or munch to your involvement in the lifestyle?” Responses to this question were on a five-point scale, with “5” denoting “very important.” In a similar vein, munch organizers were asked two questions, “How important are the munches and similar, non-play events for the kinkster community?” and “How important are the munches and similar, non-play events for your involvement in the lifestyle?” Responses in the organizer survey were coded as they were in the survey of munch participants. The frequencies of the responses to this are shown in Table One below.

(Table One about here)

These data generally show that the non-play event is considered an important event for the lifestyle. What is most interesting is that there is a large difference between how organizers of the events tend to rate the event as being more important for the community than it is for the organizer herself or himself. What this implies is that while all seem to deem that these events are important for the community and the self, we see that the organizers feel it is more important for the community than for themselves. This difference is interesting and suggestive that part of the reason that they work in ways to organize non-play events for the community is to help the community develop and assist members more than the organizer benefits from the events.

In terms of the independent variables investigated, there are many different demographic and other variables investigated to learn about the segmentations of the valuation of the event in the lifestyle/community. To start, a dummy variable was used for both datasets to denote the sex of the respondent. Since gender is a common demographic variable to collect and since gender plays a large role in terms of conditioning a person's interpretation of the world, a dummy variable was created from the two gender-based questions used in the datasets. In both cases, respondents were asked about their biological gender and their gender identification. In both of the datasets, these two variables were highly correlated. It was decided to demarcate the males by using biology rather than gender identification. All those identifying as males were denoted with a "1" while all others were denoted with a zero in both databases.

Age was also used in the analysis to determine whether the age of the respondent would impact upon attitudes towards the munch. These data were gathered in categories with higher numbers denoting older respondents. The number of years of involvement in the lifestyle were also used

as an independent variable, based upon the premise that newer members of the community would place more value on the events, as it is a major institution introducing people to members of the community and enabling networking and learning. To denote differences in a person's orientation, dominants and submissives were denoted with dummy variables. In addition, singles who had never been married were denoted with a dummy variable.

Education levels and whether respondents had children were also used in the analysis. However, in both surveys, the way that the question of whether the respondent is a mother/father was asked in a different way. In the participant survey, respondents were merely asked if they had children or not. So in the participant survey, a dummy variable was used to denote those with children. In the organizer survey, a scale was used to denote the number of children the organizer has, with "more than five" being the highest category. There is a theoretical reason for why the number of children would compete against the importance of munches and other non-play events, as the family commitment of having children may either make such social pursuits as the munch more important as an escape from family obligations or make munches less valuable, as respondents may have family commitments that they value more than BDSM events.

In addition, there were geographical dummy variables taken into account, assuming that it is possible that there are geographic differences between munch cultures in different countries view the munch and other similar events. In both surveys, dummy variables denoting respondents from New Zealand/Australia and Canada were used to differentiate the respondents from the USA dominated database. This variable is used to test the notion that these different countries may have distinct munch cultures.

The participant survey asked other key questions that would enable differentiation of opinions on the munch and other such events that was not asked in the organizer survey. The participant survey asked questions to identify how kinky respondents are, the sexual orientation of respondents, and how secretive respondents are with regards to their involvement in the lifestyle. Respondents were asked how kinky they feel they are in their personal/sex lives, with the higher numbers of the scale indicating the highest level of kinkiness. Respondents were also asked about their sexual orientation using the six-point Kinsey scale, with pure heterosexuals identifying themselves as zero and those with only homosexuals rating themselves as a six. Those who did not respond to this question were dropped from the analysis. It should be noted that the sample had very few purely homosexual respondents, as the respondents were very much concentrated between the purely heterosexual and purely bisexual. Finally, respondents were asked how secretive they are in their involvement in the lifestyle, in the event that this would impact upon being seen in public at such events. Higher numbers reflect greater secretiveness about involvement in the lifestyle.

In addition, a variable derived from factor analysis was used in the participant survey. In the participant survey, a battery of questions were asked with regards to various attitudes towards munches, such as alcohol consumption, educational opportunities, socialization opportunities, community engagement, and sexual aspects of the munch. The responses to these questions were then used in factor analysis to create two different dimensions that could be used in multiple regressions as independent variables. EFA was used for this, as this work is largely exploratory and no similar research using factor analysis had been done before.

There were also some independent variables that were only used in the organizer survey. One was a dummy variable indicating those who had received rewards denoting those respondents who had report having received rewards from venues in which munches and other such events have taken place. The other variable is a scale indicating the number of munches or other such events an organizer had organized, with higher numbers indicating more experience organizing munches. Figures One and Two Illustrate the concepts that were thought to influence attitudes towards munch events and organizers/participants.

(Figure One about Here)

(Figure Two about Here)

Findings

In the first regressions, we investigate the attitudes and attributes that influence the organizers' assessment of the importance of the munch and similar non-play events for the BDSM community. Table Two summarizes the information with regards to the independent variables used in the analysis of the organizers of munches. The variables were grouped into categories related to the lifestyle of the respondent, munch-related experience and issues, and basic demographics of the respondent.

(Table Two about here)

The output for the multiple regression are shown in Table Three below. In general, the OLS multiple regression shows that there are few or no issues with collinearity, the intercept for the

dependent variable shows no statistical issues of concern, and the model itself seems to explain about 15 percent of the variation of the dependent variable, as the adjusted R-squared is .148. While the model seems to be fairly predictive, not all of the independent variables are equally predictive. The results of the regression illustrates that most of the independent variables have no impact upon the dependent variable. One thing that is noteworthy about the independent variables is that there is no indication that perceptions among Canadian and New Zealand/Australian responders differ from the other respondents, suggesting that there is no reason to believe that perceptions of the importance of the munch is different from country to country. It should be noted that these two groups (Canadian and New Zealand/Australian respondents could be identified, as substantial numbers of them were available in the data to differentiate them from others).

(TABLE 3 About Here)

However, what does show to be the most powerful predictor is the importance the organizers place upon the importance of the munch and similar events for the community. The more importance that organizers place on the munch and similar events for the community, the more importance the respondent places upon these events for herself or himself. In addition, there is a positive relationship between how many events an organizer has planned and the importance that she/he places upon the events for herself/himself. However, there are other indicators that are also linked with the dependent variable, namely the more years in the lifestyle, the less importance organizers place upon the events, while both dominants and submissive tend to place more value upon the events. However, there are also those things that are negatively related to

the dependent variable. For example, the more years of experience in the lifestyle and the more educated respondents tend to place less importance in the munch and related events for their involvement in the lifestyle. In general, the findings of the regression on event organizers show that the importance that they place on the institution for the community and the experience that they have in planning events is positively linked with positive ratings of the importance of the events for the community. However, it seems that the more experienced in the lifestyle and the more educated do not place as much value on the events for the community.

In terms of analyzing the data from the munch participants, it was necessary to delineate the independent variables that could be used for the analysis. Table Four below illustrates the independent variables used in the analysis. As with the data above, the independent variables were grouped by lifestyle-related variables, munch-related variables, and the demographics of the respondent.

(TABLE 4 About Here)

However, because of the large data and many questions asked in the survey of the participants, additional data were capable of being extracted from the data. Table Five below illustrates two salient factors among the munch participants that can be derived from the data. The two salient factors are “socialization” and “sexual interaction,” as shown in Table Five below. The factor that seems to be most coherent is the socialization factor, while sexual interaction lags slightly behind. As these two factors seem to be salient and empirically measurable, they are also incorporated into the analysis of munch participants as independent variables.

(TABLE 5 About Here)

A multiple regression with the previously mentioned independent variables was run. The output of the regression is shown in Table Six below. In general, the model seems to work fairly well. Although the adjusted R-squared is not particularly high (.141), the intercept and lack of collinearity suggest few statistical issues to be addressed. Although not entirely comparable, the adjusted R-squared of this regression is only slightly smaller relative to that of the regressions from the regressions based upon the organizers' survey. What is interesting about the findings is that the regional dummy variables show that there seems to be no regional differences in how the munch is rated, among the participants. However, there are a number of noteworthy findings from independent variables that show evidence of strong relationships with the dependent variable.

(TABLE 6 About Here)

In terms of the lifestyle variables, it seems that the number of years in the lifestyle and being a dominant lead an individual to value the institution of the munch less. In addition, of the two different identified factors, it seems that only the factor of "socialization" seems to have a positive impact upon the valuation of the munch and similar events for participants. In addition, an unsurprising finding is that the frequency with which a person attends munches is positively related to how important a person feels that the munch is for her/his involvement in the lifestyle.

Finally, it seems that the more educated respondents are most likely to rate the importance of the munch for their participation in the lifestyle.

Conclusion

The findings of this research give us insight into the world of BDSM and the importance of the social institution of the munch. The munch, as an event that hides in plain sight can teach us a great deal about the importance of the role of the event for creating a sense of community. As such, the finding on the relationship of the institution of the munch and the BDSM community support the findings of others (De Bres & Davis, 2001; Derrett, 2003; Kerwin et al., 2015; Legg & White, 2015; Obst et al., 2007; Piazzini & Harris, 2016; Stone & Millan, 2011; van Winkel et al., 2014), showing that events can and do play an important role in terms of creating a sense of community. However, the research goes further by looking into the demographics and attitudes that lead people to place value in events, as something creating a community. The findings suggest that participants and organizers differ slightly in the demographics and attitudes that are linked with placing value upon the events for their personal involvement in the lifestyle. The findings also give us insight into the volunteer organizers and the participants in events, in terms of the things that influence how much importance they place on the event for the community they serve. At any rate, the findings show the importance of an underground event that occurs in plain sight seems to play an important role in terms of creating and sustaining a sense of community, in a world generally unaccepting of the kink/BDSM lifestyle.

In addition, the findings also bring to a broader public knowledge of the munch as a critical and commercially exploitable social institution. As kink/BDSM becomes more mainstream, the

commercial relevance of the institutions of kink/BDSM become clearer (Tomazos et al, 2017). Thus, the transition of a minority leisure pursuit into a mainstream and commercially relevant activity becomes increasingly clear. The findings give some market intelligence into the institution of the munch and thus enable future researchers to learn more about the commercial possibilities of the institution.

Another critical contribution that this analysis makes for the understanding of events is that the importance of an event may be especially high for those entering into a new lifestyle. For example, in this analysis, we see that the importance of the munch for newcomers in the lifestyle (both for those who are organizers and those who are simply participating in munches) is higher than for those who have been in the lifestyle for some time. The evidence from this analysis shows that this critical social event in the kink/BDSM lifestyle seems to be most important for people new to the lifestyle and is not so critical for those who have been in the lifestyle for longer periods. The suggestion is that the importance of these events decay over time. Such critical social events for other niche markets and lifestyles may also be found to decay over time, once people have established a bedrock of knowledge and have built a social network within the particular lifestyle. Munch organizers are likely aware of the importance that their events play in introducing new people to the lifestyle but the evidence from the data show that they should remain mindful of the importance that these events have for those being socialized into the lifestyle/subculture/community.

The analysis shows that for organizers, the data are especially interesting, as they suggest that the organizers are motivated largely by a belief that the munch is an important institution for the

BDSM community. In addition, it seems that the longer organizers are in the lifestyle, the less they seem to feel that the institution of the munch is important for them. It is also noteworthy that the more educated organizers are more likely to rate the munch as unimportant for them. These data show that the level of dedication that munch organizers have is based upon the importance they believe the institution plays in the BDSM community, even if it is less important for them. This volunteer spirit supports the findings of Saleh & Wood (1998), suggesting that the reason that those who volunteer their efforts in organizing munches do so as they feel it is linked with their identity, albeit that the identity is not ethno-cultural but has to do more with a sexual identity.

The analysis, shows that for the participants, one of key reasons that they attend munches is to socialize. What is noteworthy about that is that the other independent variable denoting the munch as something linked with a person's sex life is not statistically linked with the dependent variable. What this means is that for the participants, the evidence suggests that people attend the munch more to socialize than to find sexual partners, something that would likely be a bit surprising to those outside of the BDSM lifestyle. In addition, the findings show that those participants who had been in the lifestyle longer place less value upon the munch for their involvement in the lifestyle, likely because they have social networks and have learned enough about the BDSM lifestyle that exposure to ideas and people who can help them learn about the lifestyle may go through a diminishing return from munch attendance.

Both datasets show us some interesting things about munches and what they mean for those in the BDSM lifestyle. For example, they generally show the importance of the institution for those

in the lifestyle. The data also show that those who have been in the lifestyle for longer periods, tend to rate the importance of the munch and similar event as less important for their own personal involvement in the lifestyle than those who are newer to the lifestyle/community. There are also some other demographic and other factors that seem to condition how important munches are for a person's involvement in the lifestyle, sometimes in interesting ways. For example, it seems that more educated respondents who are munch organizers tend to view the munch as not particularly important for their involvement in the lifestyle, while more educated participants at munches seem to appreciate more the importance of the munch for their involvement in the lifestyle.

There are some complications with the research. For one thing, the dependent variable is not entirely comparable, as the language used was slightly different from one survey to the other. In the participant survey, participants were asked they had "attended sloshes or munches," when fielded internationally, the word "slosh" was not universally understood, since it is language largely limited to the Midwest of the US and Canada. So the second survey (the survey of organizers) avoided using the word "slosh." Future research, using the same triangulation approach, should ensure that the dependent variable is worded in an identical way. Since some mild wording differences may impact upon responses, future research should use an identically-worded question to measure how important this type of event is for those in the community, whether an event organizer or an event participant.

The munch, as an institution and an event type, is something that future research should look into further. The munch and the way that it is organized, using volunteer labor who are dedicated to a

sense of purpose and owns few or no assets fits well into the literature on volunteer in tourism and hospitality (see, for example, Cho, 2007; Jargo & Deery, 2002) as well as the growing literature on the sharing economy in tourism (see, for example, Brochado et al., 2017; Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015; Ert, et al., 2015). In addition, research on the munch is by its very nature interdisciplinary, incorporating elements of Psychology, Sociology, Politics, Law, and other fields. As such, the study of the munch demands interdisciplinary thinking and suggests the development of interdisciplinary theory building, something Getz (2012) had called for a half decade ago.

The future is unwritten, but there is a strong suggestion that the sexual revolution that we have experienced since the 1960s will continue. While same-sex marriage is sanctioned in many countries, there are sexual minorities that are still marginalized, as their practices are generally not well understood or interpreted as being dangerous or threatening. It becomes increasingly apparent that the social institutions play a role in identification of people and that these institutions matter for people. The munch as the prevailing social institution of the BSDM community deserves further attention, as it may eventually be an institution that may be commercially exploited or may be an institution that can tell us more about how subcultures create networks to attract new members, socialize new members, and train people in things that formal education does not teach.

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Table 1: Rating of the importance of the munch

	Munch Participants Rating of Importance for Self	Munch Organizers Rating of Importance for Kinkster community	Munch Organizers Rating of Importance for Self
Very unimportant (1)	125 (10.6%)	2 (.8%)	7 (2.9%)
Somewhat unimportant (2)	115 (9.8%)	0 (0%)	7 (2.9%)
Neither unimportant nor important (3)	146 (12.4%)	3 (1.3%)	24 (10.1%)
Somewhat important (4)	384 (32.7%)	28 (11.8%)	68 (28.6%)
Very important (5)	243 (20.7%)	181 (76.1%)	107 (45%)
Total	1013	238	213
Missing System	161	24	25
Mean	3.5	4.8	4.23

Table 2: Independent Variables Used in the Analysis for Munch Organizers

<i>Variables:</i>	Coding	Mean	Standard deviation
<i>Lifestyle-related variables:</i>			
Years in the lifestyle	3 – 0-5 years	14.35	9.927
	8 – 6-10 years		
	15 – 11-20 years		
	25 – 21-30 years		
	35 – 31-40 years		
	40 – 40+ years		
Dominant	Dummy variable	0.47	0.500
Submissive	Dummy variable	0.24	0.428
<i>Munch-related variables:</i>			
Importance of munches and similar, non-play events for the kinkster community	1-very unimportant	4.82	0.492
	5-very important		
Number of munches or similar events respondent helped organize	1 – 1 munch	14.93	6.947
	3 – 2-5 munches		
	8 – 6-10 munches		
	15 – 11-19 munches		
	20 – 20+ munches		
Rewarded from venues		0.18	0.385
<i>Demographic variables:</i>			
Males derived by gender	1- male, 0-otherwise	0.51	0.501
Age	22 – 18-25 years	42.58	12.726
	30 – 26-35 years		
	40 – 36-45 years		
	52 – 46-60 years		
	68 – 61-75 years		
	75 – 75+ years		
Single (never married)	Dummy variable	0.36	0.481
Number of children	Number	1.00	1.301
Education	1 – Less than high school	3.80	1.032
	2 – High school of GED		
	3 – Some college or trade/technical school		
	4 – Bachelor’s degree		
	5 – Masters degree		
	6 - Doctorate		
Canada	Dummy variable	0.10	0.301
Australia/New Zealand	Dummy variable	0.03	0.171

Table 3: Munch Organizers and Their Involvement in the Lifestyle

Regression analysis results

Dependent Variable: <i>Importance of munches and similar, non-play events for respondent's involvement in the lifestyle</i>	Unstandardized		Standardized		Collinearity Statistics	
	Coefficients		Coefficients		Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		
(Constant)	1.555	0.794		1.959*		
<i>Lifestyle-related variables:</i>						
Years in the lifestyle	-0.025	0.009	-0.253	-2.830***	0.536	1.867
Dominants	0.386	0.163	0.196	2.371**	0.628	1.592
Submissive	0.436	0.187	0.189	2.335**	0.653	1.532
<i>Munch-related variables:</i>						
Importance of munches and similar, non-play events for the kinkster community	0.531	0.135	0.265	3.946***	0.949	1.053
Number of munches or similar events respondent helped organize	0.021	0.010	0.149	2.176**	0.914	1.095
Rewarded from venues	0.167	0.172	0.065	0.968	0.947	1.056
<i>Demographic variables:</i>						
Males derived by gender	0.115	0.146	0.058	0.784	0.773	1.294
Age	0.006	0.008	0.072	0.736	0.450	2.222
Single (never married)	0.078	0.162	0.038	0.482	0.682	1.466
Number of children	0.042	0.065	0.056	0.655	0.591	1.693
Education	-0.134	0.068	-0.140	-1.979**	0.849	1.177
Canada	-0.291	0.226	-0.089	-1.290	0.906	1.104
Australia/New Zealand	0.144	0.392	0.025	0.368	0.927	1.079
<i>Model summary:</i>						
R	0.452					
R ²	0.204					
Adjusted R ²	0.148					
Standard error of the estimate	0.911					
F	3.669***					
df	13					
Number of cases	200					

Note: *** Significant at $p < 0.01$, ** Significant at $p < 0.05$, * Significant at $p < 0.10$

Table 4: Independent Variables Used in the Analysis for Munch Participants

<i>Variables:</i>	Coding	Mean	Standard deviation
<i>Lifestyle-related variables:</i>			
Years in the lifestyle	Number	6.37	3.533
Dominant	Dummy variable	0.32	0.465
Submissive	Dummy variable	0.31	0.461
<i>Munch-related variables:</i>			
Number of people attending the last munch	5 – 1-10 attendees	28.48	14.401
	15 – 11-20 attendees		
	25 – 21-30 attendees		
	40 – 31-49 attendees		
	50 – 50+ attendees		
Frequency of visit to munches	0 – Never	3.06	1.030
	1 – Just a few times ever		
	2 – Several times per year		
	3 – About once a month		
	4 – More than once a month		
<i>Demographic variables:</i>			
Males derived by gender	1- male, 0-otherwise	0.42	0.494
Age	Number	40.04	12.232
Single (never married)	Dummy variable	0.33	0.471
Have children	Dummy variable	0.39	0.488
Education	1 – Less than high school	3.04	0.892
	2 – High school / GED		
	3 – Bachelor’s degree		
	4 – Masters degree		
	5 - Doctorate		
Canada	Dummy variable	0.14	0.343
Australia/New Zealand	Dummy variable	0.05	0.218

Table 5: Munch Participant and Identified Factors

Factors	Factor loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Eigenvalue	Variance explained
FACTOR 1: Socialization		0.698	2.377	25.477%
I enjoy attending sloses and munches	0.809			
I feel like part of the community when I attend a slosch or munch	0.809			
I attend sloses or munches to socialize and meet with others in the lifestyle	0.698			
I attend sloses or munches to learn more about the lifestyle	0.529			
FACTOR 2: Sexual interaction		0.585	1.804	20.685%
The atmosphere at a slosch or munch is more sexually charged than at a similar vanilla event	0.758			
I am more flirtatious at sloses and munches than I would be at a vanilla event	0.719			
I attend sloses or munches to find partners for more private events	0.580			
I drink more at sloses and munches than I would at a vanilla event	0.515			
Total		0.622		46.459%

Notes: a) Coding: 1-completely disagree, 5-completely agree; b) Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis; c) Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 3 iterations; d) KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy=0.713; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: $\chi^2=1295.997$, $df=36$, $p=0.000$.

Table 6: Munch Participants and Their Involvement in the Lifestyle

Dependent Variable: <i>Importance of munches and similar, non-play events for respondent's involvement in the lifestyle</i>	Unstandardized		Standardized		Collinearity Statistics	
	Coefficients		Coefficients		Tolerance	VIF
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		
(Constant)	2.802	0.270		10.359***		
<i>Lifestyle-related variables:</i>						
Years in the lifestyle	-0.024	0.014	-0.064	-1.730*	0.746	1.341
Dominants	-0.225	0.113	-0.079	-1.993**	0.645	1.549
Submissive	-0.012	0.105	-0.004	-0.112	0.754	1.326
<i>Motivation-related variables:</i>						
Factor 1: Socialisation	0.324	0.049	0.247	6.661***	0.747	1.338
Factor 2: Sexual interaction	0.022	0.044	0.016	0.494	0.952	1.051
<i>Munch-related variables:</i>						
Number of people attending the last munch	0.000	0.003	0.003	0.109	0.914	1.094
Frequency of visit to munches	0.215	0.048	0.169	4.514***	0.735	1.360
<i>Demographic variables:</i>						
Males derived by gender	-0.119	0.102	-0.045	-1.163	0.700	1.429
Age	0.001	0.005	0.008	0.183	0.565	1.770
Single (never married)	-0.027	0.104	-0.010	-0.256	0.739	1.354
Have children	0.009	0.103	0.003	0.086	0.701	1.427
Education	0.096	0.049	0.065	1.979**	0.941	1.063
Canada	-0.112	0.125	-0.029	-0.900	0.967	1.034
Australia/New Zealand	-0.031	0.199	-0.005	-0.154	0.942	1.062
<i>Model summary:</i>						
R	0.395					
R ²	0.156					
Adjusted R ²	0.141					
Standard error of the estimate	1.219					
F	10.852***					
df	14					
Number of cases	838					

Note: *** Significant at $p < 0.01$, ** Significant at $p < 0.05$, * Significant at $p < 0.10$

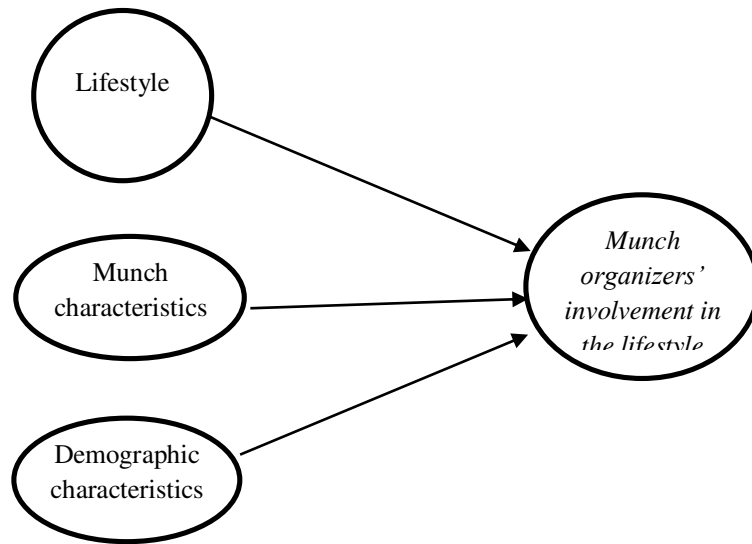


Figure 1. Factors, Influencing Munch Organizers' Involvement in the Lifestyle

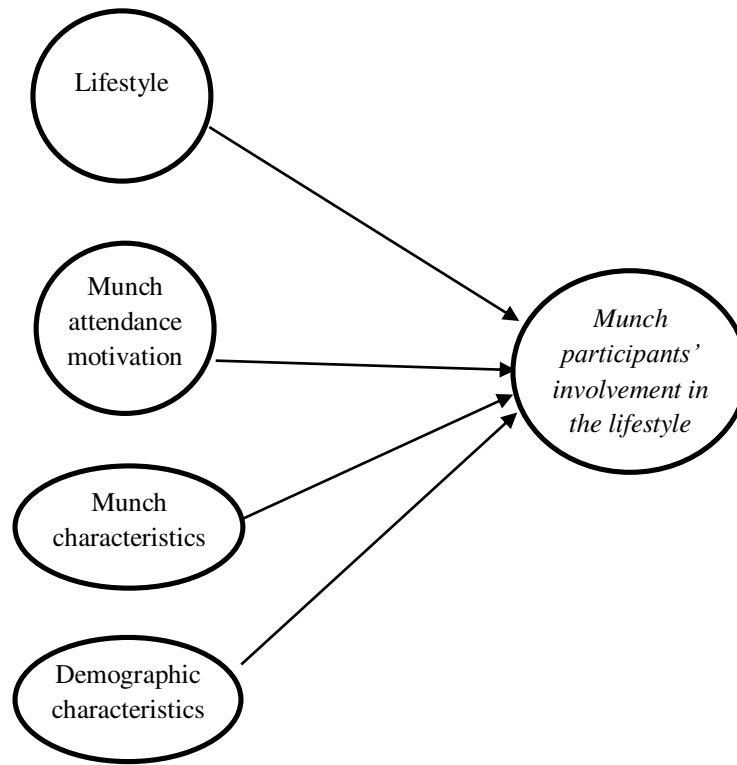


Figure 2. Factors, Influencing Munch Participants' Involvement in the Lifestyle