

# Chapter 11

## Kinky Access: Information Provided to Young Adult Kinksters by “The Next Generation” Groups on Fetlife.com

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### ABSTRACT

*The Next Generation (TNG) is a nationally recognized group of kinky people who seek to educate and socialize members between the ages of 18-35 into the kink community. This chapter explores information provided by 20 TNG groups on Fetlife.com using thematic analysis. The major emergent themes are education with an emphasis on age, socialization, asking questions, and resources; common rules with an emphasis on personal ads, photography, alcohol, and consent; and the purpose, planning, and etiquette of Munches.*

### INTRODUCTION

Kink has a broad range of activities and roles that make it impossible to research as a whole. Therefore, scholars explore specific aspects of BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism, masochism) to build upon the multifaceted realm of kink. BDSM is a practice that has been brought to the public through varying popular culture events such as films like *Belle de Jour* (1967), *9 ½ Weeks* (1986), *Secretary* (2002), and *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2015). BDSM has been studied from several lenses but remains a rather understudied form of expression. Current studies focus on specific aspects of BDSM such as kinky people of color (Cruz, 2015), technology use between BDSM sexual partners (Rubinsky, 2018), BDSM live webcams (Grant, 2014), blogging about BDSM (Mondin, 2017), negotiating gender (Simula & Sumerau, 2017), age play (Tiidenberg & Paasonen, 2019), the legality of BDSM (Gilden, 2016; Mincer, 2018), and the influence of *Fifty Shades of Grey* (e.g., Kratzer, 2020a, 2020b).

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## **Kinky Access**

The purpose of the current study is to explore a form of social media used by kinky people (kinksters) as an avenue for building community among the younger members of the kink community. A nationally recognized group of kinksters called The Next Generation (TNG) seek to socialize and educate members between the ages of 18-35. This study explores their Fetlife.com group webpages to gain insight into the information they share with their members to integrate them into the kink community.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Kink and BDSM**

#### **Understanding BDSM**

Before exploring the TNG groups of the kink community, it is essential to understand kink and BDSM. Having a basic understanding of kink-related terminology and the basic tenets of kink will assist with the understanding of the community and, specifically, the findings of this research. There are several terms used in this chapter that vanilla folks may not know. First, the term vanilla refers to anyone or anything that is not kinky. Therefore, a vanilla person is someone who does not consider themselves kinky; vanilla sex is conventional forms of sex (Wiseman, 1998); vanilla places are non-kinky places and discussing someone's vanilla life refers to the aspects of their life that are not part of the kink scene. Many people keep their kinky interests private, so it is vital to maintain confidentiality when in vanilla places like the grocery store. In kink, a scene is a slang term for a BDSM session (Wiseman, 1998) that has a specific beginning and end. A dungeon is the same as what Wiseman (1998) calls a playroom, which is "a room especially set up for SM [sadoomasochism] play. Often equipped with eyebolts, slings, whipping posts, blackout lights, mirrors, sound systems, special lighting, and so forth" (p. 373). Other terms are defined throughout the chapter.

The most important component of understanding kink is consent because any form of kink should take place between consenting adults. The kink community stresses the importance of consent on their Fetlife.com webpages and in their educational efforts online and in person. According to Ortmann and Sprott (2013), "consent is the process by which approval or acceptance of what is planned (often by another) is acceptable or agreeable" (p. 75). A person may grant consent for a specific range of time and can revoke it at any time. For most kinksters, consent ends at the closing of a scene but that is not the case for everyone. For example, unconditional consent, also known as consensual nonconsent, is common in 24/7 Dominant/submissive relationships, where "one person has agreed to submit to another inside *and outside* the bedroom for a specified amount of time (from weeks to perpetuity)" (Rainey-Smithback, 2020, p. 32).

For those interested in participating in BDSM, attaining proper information is vital. There are a great deal of resources available and Wiseman's (1998) book is widely recommended by community members. Wiseman (1998) offers an excellent introduction to BDSM that covers understanding community terminology and how specific acts of BDSM should be enacted. This book also covers consent including what consent means, who can give it, who cannot, and warning signs to look for if someone is manipulating or extorting consent. Wiseman (1998) also offers information on maintaining safety including using a "silent alarm" when playing privately with a new partner, choosing and using verbal and nonverbal safewords, the negotiation of BDSM play (including 16 points that should be covered),

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