Consent Violations Survey

Tech Report

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Background

The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom gathered data through its first Consent Survey in 2012 in order to gauge attitudes about consent and consent violations within a power exchange context. Of those responding, 33% indicated that their pre-negotiated limit had been violated and/or their safeword was ignored during a BDSM encounter.

This Consent Violations Survey was launched in 2014 to gather additional details about consent violations in a BDSM context including: the severity of the violations, who is being violated, where they were violated, the relationship and intent of those involved, the power dynamic at the time of the violation, as well as information about false accusations and from people who have committed consent violations.

SECTION II: METHODS

Procedure

The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom (NCSF) undertook an Internet survey on Consent Violations in a BDSM context and recruited participants through various electronic means, such as distribution through website posts and email list-serves belonging to the NCSF Coalition Partners and members.

The survey questions were created by Susan Wright, M.A., Co-Principal Investigator, National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, and Russell J. Stambaugh, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator. Some of the questions duplicated questions asked on the 2012 Consent Survey so data could be compared. Additional questions were developed to gain further insight into consent violations.

This project has been reviewed and endorsed by a community advisory board of the Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS), a community-based research support organization which includes members of alternative sexualities communities. This project has scientific merit, follows ethical guidelines for research, and avoids community harm in its design and methods.[i]

Derrell Cox, M.A., Department of Anthropology, Center for Applied Social Research at University of Oklahoma, assisted in the analysis and is the statistician.

Sample

The survey was posted on Survey Monkey from January to June 2014. There were 4,598 people who began the survey, with up to 210 people choosing to not respond to some of the questions in the main question set. This excellent click-through rate (95.5%) indicates people were highly motivated to respond on the issue of consent violations.

The reported number of consent violations may under-count psychologically important non-consensual incidents, because anyone so troubled that they no longer participate in real life or online BDSM communities may not have seen the survey to participate in it. On the other

hand, people who experienced consent violations may have been more motivated to respond simply because of the title of the survey.

Nearly 90% of the respondents live in the United States. Less than half heard about the Consent Violations Survey on FetLife compared to 72% of the respondents in the first Consent Survey. This is likely due to the fact that the call for the first Consent Survey was posted in FetLife Announcements, and therefore received a much wider play among the FetLife community.

The respondents ranged between 18 and more than 70 years of age, with 65% between the ages of 25-50. By race, the vast majority of individuals were Caucasian (88.84%), but a minority were Black/African American (2.6%), American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian (1.6%), Asian (1.1%), Latino(a)/Hispanic (1.8%), Multiracial or 'Other' (e.g., "Jewish" and "Middle Eastern") (4.0%). The rate of Caucasian respondents is the same as the Violence & Discrimination Survey (88.4%) conducted by Susan Wright and NCSF in 2008. This could be representative of the low rate of diversity within the organized BDSM community, or a reflection of the sampling strategy of these surveys.

Consistent with previous NCSF surveys, 71% of the respondents were not comfortable speaking to their family or coworkers about their BDSM activities. 18% were not comfortable speaking to their primary partner about their BDSM activities.

Nearly 84% of the respondents participate in a BDSM-leather-fetish online community or website. 15% have never attended a BDSM event or group, with over 23% of the sample having not attended a kink event or group in the past year.

Participants in the Consent Violations Survey were 55% female, 36% male, and nearly 10% identify as gender queer, transgender, gender fluid or agender (see Figure 1). This sample is not typical of the gender breakdown in the two NCSF Violence and Discrimination surveys, which were divided approximately evenly between men and women. This may be due to the fact that the female respondents experienced a higher rate of consent violations and therefore there was a higher motivation for females to take a survey about consent violations.

Consistent with previous NCSF surveys, 41% identified as heterosexual while nearly 60% of the participants identified as a sexual minority, with larger proportions identifying as bisexual (26%) and pansexual (16%), and smaller quantities identifying as

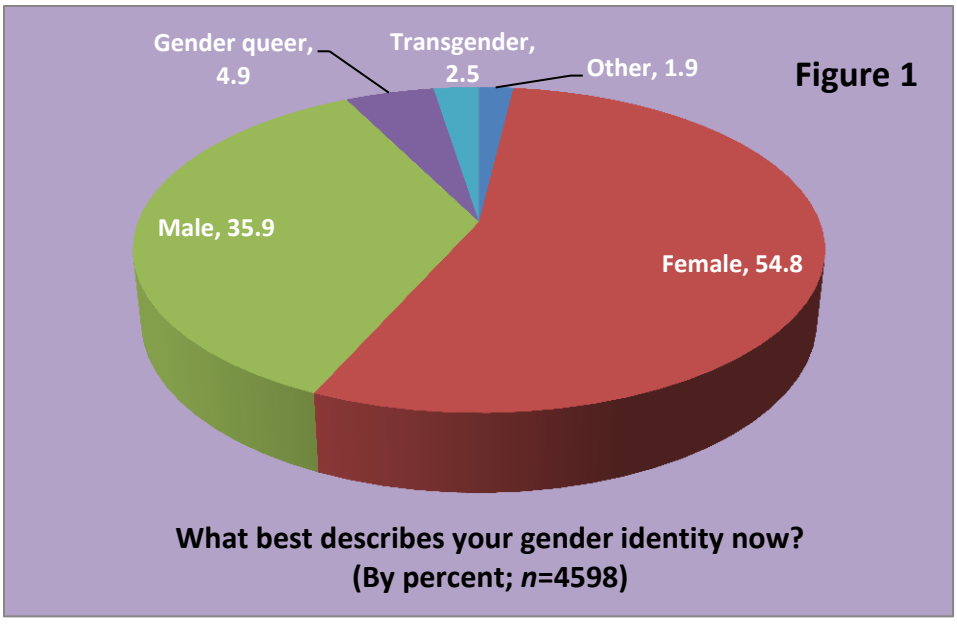
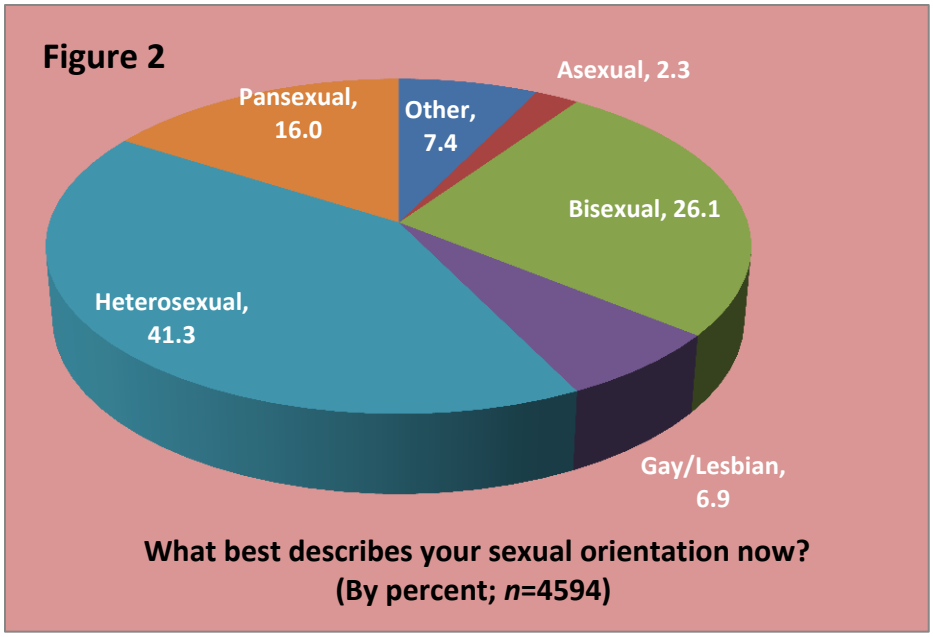


Figure 1



gay/lesbian, asexual questioning, hetero/homoflexible, queer, unlabeled, or other (see Figure 2).

SECTION III: RESULTS

Touching at BDSM Events

Nearly 36% of the respondents reported being touched without permission at a BDSM meeting, club, munch, party or event. Almost one-third of these consent violations were a nonsexual touch while 38% involved sexual touching on breasts, genitals or buttocks. Multiple violations at various times were reported by 10% of the respondents (see Table 1).

Table 1. Touched without permission at an event	**Responses– 1,603**
Hair touching	1% (22)
Hug	6% (91)
Multiple violations/multiple times	10% (162)
Hit by a toy/hand	13% (212)
Nonsexual touch	32% (506)
Sexual touch	38% (610)

Of note: 39% of the female participants and 28% of the male participants in the survey were touched without permission at a BDSM club or event. Over 42% of those who are gender

queer, transgender, or other gender identities were touched, while heterosexuals were less likely to be touched without permission (see Table 2).

Table 2.	**Yes *n* (%) *N* Total**
Gender Identity	
Females	967 (39%) 2472
Males	452 (28%) 1612
Gender queer	101 (46%) 219
Transgender	47 (42%) 111
Other	36 (44%) 85
Sexual Orientation	
Asexual	23 (23%) 102
Bisexual	437 (37%) 1176
Gay/Lesbian	133 (43%) 308
Heterosexual	499 (27%) 1857
Pansexual	342 (47%) 723
Other	169 (51%) 331

For those who were touched without permission, only 28% reported it to event producers. Of those people, 61% thought the producers were very or extremely helpful, while nearly 19% reported they were not helpful at all. The violations tended to happen in the social space (57%) followed by the play space (30%), (see Figure 3).

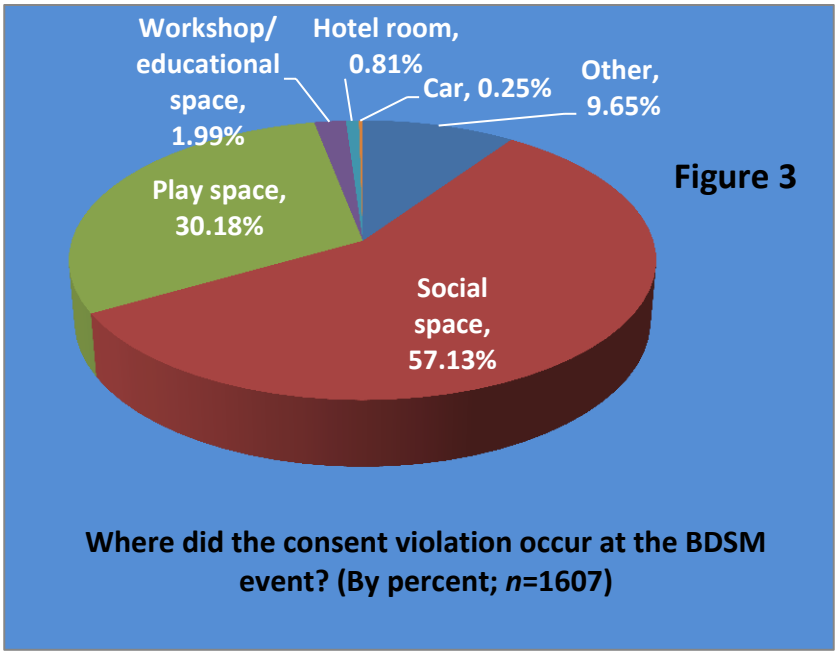


Figure 3

Nearly 11% (485 people) reported that they have touched someone without permission at an event. 75% reported it was a nonsexual touch or hug. There was no statistical difference in the gender identity among those people who touched someone (see Table 3). The admissions are flat with respect to gender, but complaints are highly asymmetrical.

Table 3.	Yes *n* (%) *N* Total
Females	246 (10%) 2460
Males	196 (12%) 1607
Gender queer	22 (10%) 219
Transgender	12 (11%) 111
Other	9 (11%) 84

Consent Violations during BDSM Activities

In regards to consent violations during a BDSM scene or relationship, a total of 1,307 (29% of 4,503 respondents) reported that their pre-negotiated limits and/or their safeword have been violated (see Figure 4). A total of 24.5% (1,101 people) said their pre-negotiated limits were violated during a BDSM scene or relationship, while 13.1% (588 people) said their pre-negotiated safeword or safesign was ignored. Altogether, 382 (8.5%) people said both their pre-negotiated limits and their safeword/safesign were violated.

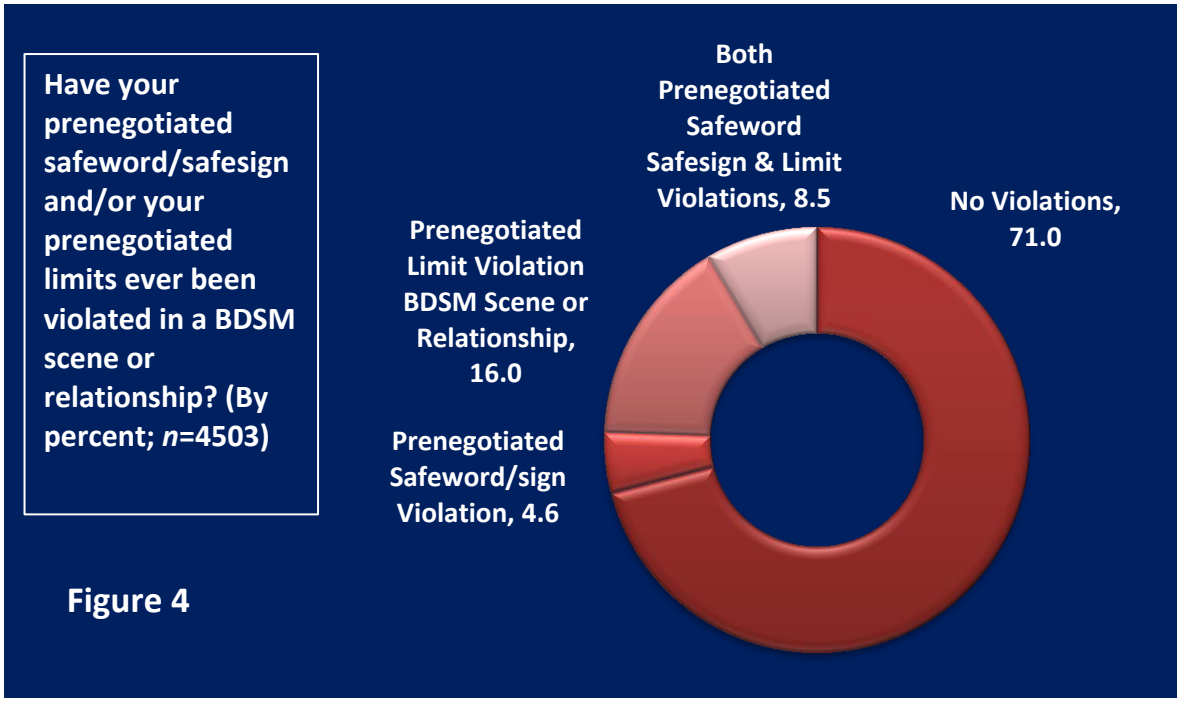


Figure 4

Between 1,077 and 991 people responded to the detailed question set that asked about one specific consent violation they have experienced. That means 232 people declined to answer any questions in the detailed question set even though they said their pre-negotiated limits and/or safeword were violated.

The detailed question set asked why they thought their pre-negotiated limits or safeword were violated. One-third of those who responded said they were manipulated or

coerced, while another 26% say they were attacked by a predator. Nearly 1 in 3 of the consent violations were caused by an accident, miscommunication, or a lack of skills or knowledge. Only 2% of those who experienced a consent violation indicated that alcohol was involved. The other 7% reported it was part of their dynamic of pushing limits, and they were ultimately okay with it (see Table 4).

Table 4.	**1018 Responses**
It was because of alcohol	27 (2%)
It was an accident	58 (6%)
It was part of our dynamic	71 (7%)
Lack of skills or knowledge	103 (11%)
Misunderstanding or miscommunication	149 (15%)
Attacked by a predator	265 (26%)
Manipulated or coerced	345 (33%)

When the "Why?" question was cross-referenced with gender of the respondent whose consent was violated, we found that transgender people are more at risk of misunderstanding/miscommunication and for manipulation/coercion. Females and gender queer people are about five times more likely to be attacked by a predator and manipulated/coerced compared to males (see Table 5).

Table 5.	**Female (2519)**	**Male (1651)**	**Gender Queer (226)**	**Trans (115)**	**Other (87)**
Part of their Dynamic	44 (2%)	20 (1%)	1 (0.4%)	2 (2%)	0 (0.0)
Accidental	28 (1%)	8 (0.5%)	3 (1%)	2 (2%)	2 (2%)
Lacking skills/knowledge	69 (3%)	26 (2%)	5 (2%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
Misunderstanding	106 (4%)	29 (2%)	4 (2%)	8 (7%)	2 (2%)
Manipulated/Coerced	241 (10%)	32 (2%)	26 (12%)	17 (15%)	8 (9%)
Attacked by Predator	124 (5%)	16 (1%)	10 (5%)	2 (2%)	1 (1%)
Other	153 (6%)	39 (2%)	13 (6%)	6 (5%)	6 (7%)
Total Respondents	765 (30%)	170 (10%)	62 (27%)	39 (34%)	20 (23%)
No Answer	1754 (70%)	1481 (90%)	164 (72%)	76 (66%)	67 (77%)

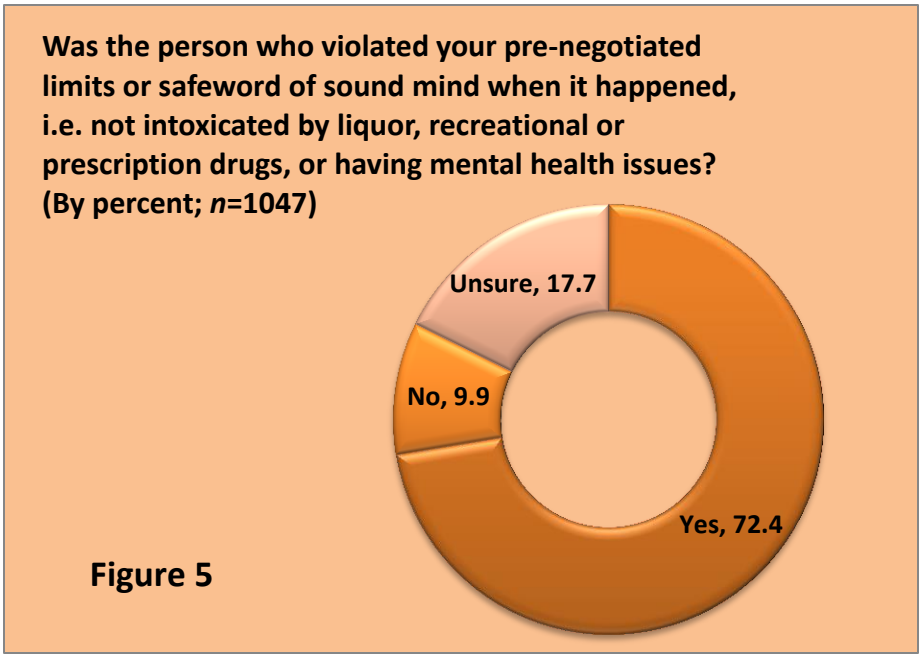
When we cross referenced the "Why?" question with the power exchange role of the person whose consent was violated, we found that tops were four to ten times less likely to experience consent violations, especially when it concerned part of the dynamic (10 times less likely), misunderstanding (4.4 times less likely), and manipulation/coercion (4 times less likely) (see Table 6).

Table 6.	**Top (1165)**	**Bottom (1694)**	**Switch (1447)**	**Other (272)**
Part of Dynamic	4 (0.3%)	43 (3%)	18 (1%)	2 (0.7%)
Accidental	3 (0.3%)	20 (1%)	18 (1%)	2 (0.7%)
Lacking skills/knowledge	14 (1%)	45 (3%)	38 (3%)	6 (2%)
Misunderstanding	11 (0.9%)	68 (4%)	59 (4%)	11 (4%)
Manipulated/Coerced	30 (2%)	142 (8%)	129 (9%)	24 (8%)
Attacked by Predator	17 (2%)	71 (4%)	54 (4%)	9 (3%)
Other	44 (4%)	82 (5%)	69 (5%)	20 (7%)
Total Respondents	123 (10%)	471 (28%)	385 (27%)	74 (27%)
No Answer	1042 (89%)	1223 (72%)	1062 (73%)	198 (73%)

When asked, "What did you think about the violation when it happened? Check all that apply," the majority of respondents reported that they wanted it to stop, while nearly one in three weren't sure if their consent was violated (see Table 7).

Table 7.	**1059 Responses**
Wanted it to stop	857 (81%)
Weren't sure if consent was violated	330 (31%)
Didn't mind it	72 (7%)
Couldn't stop it/didn't know/in subspace	16 (2%)

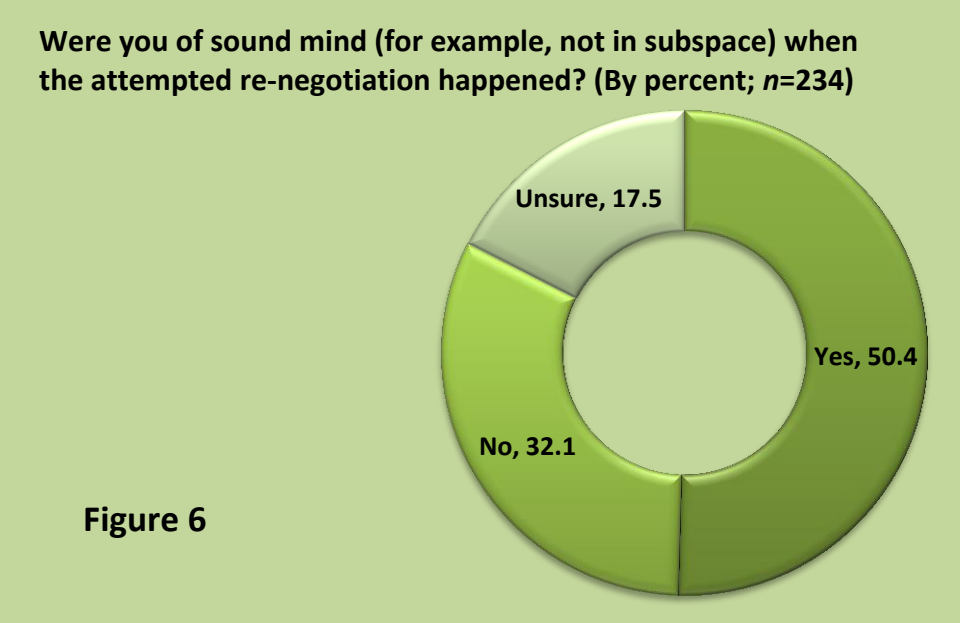
In 72% of the reported violations, the person whose consent was violated was of sound mind when it happened, eg. not intoxicated by liquor, recreational or prescription drugs or having a mental health issue. However, nearly 28% indicated the person who violated them either was not of sound mind or they were not sure if they were of sound mind (see Figure 5).



One in 4 people reported that they did not negotiate the BDSM interaction for a variety of reasons: either they weren't given a chance (2%), or they chose not to negotiate (7%), or they were in a relationship with previous experience together and did not negotiate the interaction that involved a consent violation (17%), (See Table 8). The majority responded that they negotiated in person.

Table 8. How did you negotiate?	Responses–1053
Wasn't given chance to negotiate	2% (24)
Multiple negotiation methods used	3% (30)
Didn't negotiate	7% (77)
Online negotiation	10% (108)
In relationship/no negotiation for scene	17% (176)
In person negotiation	60% (638)

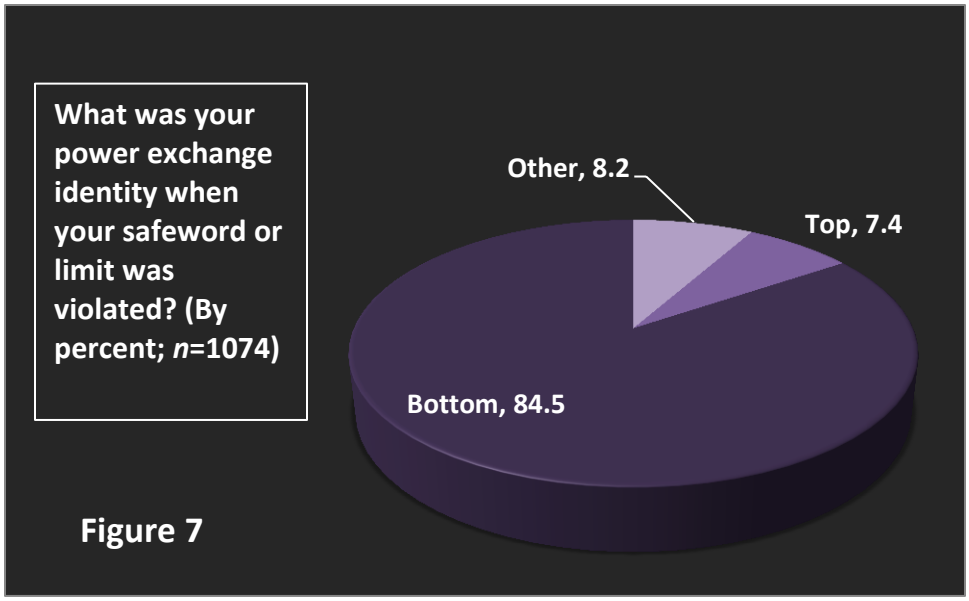
234 people said the person who violated their consent attempted to renegotiate their limits (23% of 1,047 responses). In only half of those cases, the person whose consent was violated reported they were of sound mind during the attempted negotiation (see Figure 6).



Who is being violated?

Out of the 1,098 people who indicated their gender and sexual orientation and reported that their pre-negotiated limits were violated, gender queers experienced the most violations at 36%, while at the lowest end, 13% of the male participants had their pre-negotiated limits violated (see Table 9). Heterosexuals represented the largest segment of the sample (40%) yet reported the least amount of consent violations at 18%.

Table 9.	Yes *n* (%) *N* Total
Gender Identity	
Females	747 (31%) 2449
Males	213 (13%) 1594
Gender queer	79 (36%) 217
Transgender	37 (34%) 109
Other	22 (27%) 82
Sexual Orientation	
Asexual	20 (20%) 101
Bisexual	323 (28%) 1167
Gay/Lesbian	79 (26%) 301
Heterosexual	332 (18%) 1833
Pansexual	220 (31%) 717
Other	124 (38%) 330



Over 84% (907 of 1,074 respondents) said their power exchange identity was bottom when their safeword or limit was violated (see Figure 7). As far as the role they were in, 58% (624 of 1,076 respondents) reported they were in the role of submissive at the time it happened, while the next largest category was masochist at 14% (149 people).

There is a clear trend across most of these categories of power exchange bottoms for increasing risks for consent violations across the spectrum, from submissives (lower risk) on one low end and property or girl/boy on the high end (see Table 10).

Table 10.	Female y/*n* (%)	Male	Gender Queer	Transgender	Other
submissive	501/1621 (31%)	107/512 (21%)	50/133 (38%)	20/66 (30%)	10/40 (25%)
Slave	130/425 (31%)	29/135 (22%)	9/21 (43%)	9/24 (38%)	2/8 (25%)
property	97/304 (32%)	19/91 (21%)	9/19 (47%)	8/15 (53%)	3/9 (33%)
girl/boy	180/488 (37%)	23/99 (23%)	25/50 (50%)	16/40 (40%)	3/23 (13%)

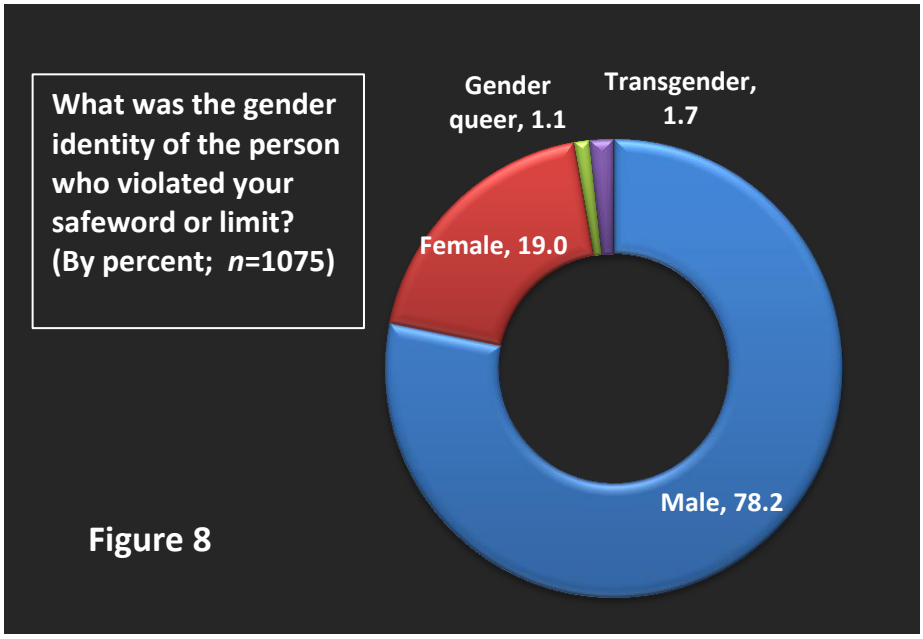
This trend is also seen among bisexual and pansexual power exchange bottoms, while for heterosexuals, the risk seems to be very similar across the spectrum (see Table 11).

Table 11.	Asexual y/n	Bisexual	Gay/Lesbian	Heterosexual	Pansexual
submissive	11/41 (27%)	207/728 (28%)	43/156 (28%)	209/865 (24%)	151/417 (36%)
Slave	3/12 (25%)	66/222 (30%)	16/38 (42%)	48/202 (24%)	35/100 (35%)
property	3/6 (50%)	41/139 (30%)	9/24 (38%)	35/146 (24%)	35/86 (41%)
girl/boy	4/12 (33%)	85/201 (42%)	17/59 (29%)	36/162 (22%)	73/182 (40%)

Who is violating their consent?

According to the people whose pre-negotiated limits or safeword were ignored, 78% (841 of the violators) were male, while 19% (204) were female (see Figure 8). As for the sexual orientation of the person who violated them, 65% said the person was heterosexual.

20% (220 people) reported that the person who violated their consent held a leadership role in a BDSM-leather-fetish group or event at the time it happened. Nearly 1/3rd know of someone else who was violated by the person who violated their safeword or pre-negotiated limits.



Nearly half said the person who violated their consent was a lover, play partner or partner (see Table 12). For 1 in 3 (344 people) it was their first time playing together, while 40% (422 people) had played with them more than 5 times when it happened. 42% said they had known the person who violated their consent less than 3 months, while 1 in 3 people had known the person for more than a year.

Table 12.	**1,058 Responses**
Stranger	7% 74
Acquaintance	24% 261
Friend	18% 194
Lover/play partner	24% 255
Partner	25% 264
Ex	0.9% 10

When gender is cross-referenced with the question: What relation did you have to the person who violated your safeword or pre-negotiated limit? Males reported being at less risk for consent violation by a partner or lover than females and other genders, while they were at greater risk from strangers than the other genders (see Table 13).

Table 13.	**Female (773)**	**Male (174)**	**Gender Queer (63)**	**Transgender (39)**	**Other (21)**
Other	66 (9%)	10 (6%)	6 (10%)	6 (15%)	1 (5%)
Stranger	41 (5%)	19 (11%)	5 (8%)	3 (8%)	1 (5%)
Acquaintance	179 (23%)	50 (29%)	15 (24%)	6 (15%)	7 (33%)
Friend	134 (17%)	42 (24%)	6 (10%)	9 (23%)	1 (5%)
Lover	147 (19%)	24 (14%)	16 (25%)	6 (15%)	6 (29%)
Partner	198 (26%)	28 (16%)	15 (24%)	9 (23%	5 (24%)
Ex	8 (1%)	1 (0.6%)	-	-	-

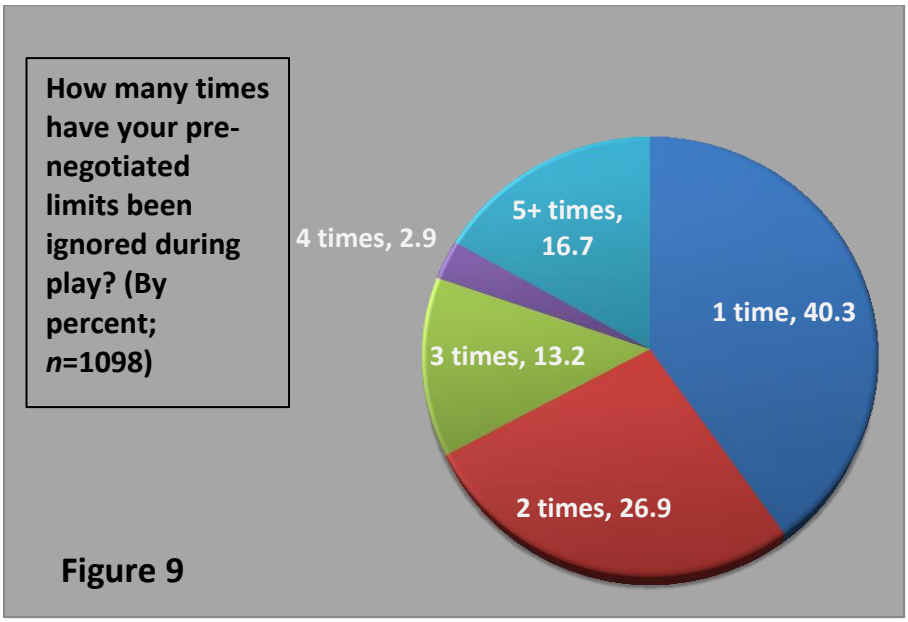
When the question is cross-referenced with sexual orientation, pansexuals were at a higher risk of being violated by strangers. The risk of consent violation by lovers and partners across gender orientations is approximately the same (see Table 14).

Table 14.	**Asexual (17)**	**Bisexual (320)**	**Same-sex (79)**	**Hetero (313)**	**Pan (223)**	**Other (117)**
Other	1 (5.9)	22 (6.9)	7 (8.9)	29 (9.3)	18 (8.1)	13 (11.1)
Stranger	3 (17.6)	15 (4.7)	6 (7.6)	15 (4.8)	22 (9.9)	8 (6.8)
Acquaintance	5 (29.4)	82 (25.6)	15 (19.0)	83 (26.5)	50 (22.4)	21 (17.9)
Friend	5 (29.4)	61 (19.1)	20 (25.3)	53 (16.9)	33 (14.8)	20 (17.1)
Lover	1 (5.9)	61 (19.1)	13 (16.5)	54 (17.3)	40 (17.9)	29 (24.8)
Partner	2 (11.8)	76 (23.8)	18 (22.8)	77 (23.4)	57 (25.6)	25 (21.4)
Ex	-	3 (0.9)	-	2 (0.6)	3 (1.3)	1 (0.9)

Frequency of Consent Violations

Among those whose limits or safeword was violated, 40% say it has happened to them once. 27% reported being violated twice, while 33% reported their limits have been violated three or more times. Of those whose consent was violated 3 or more times, 29% have only been involved in BDSM community groups or websites for 3 years or less.

A spike is seen among those who reported being violated 5+ times: 17% of those violated (183 people) (see Figure 9).



Heterosexuals and pansexuals have higher rates of being violated 5+ times, while gays and lesbians have the lowest rates. A higher percentage of gender queer and transgender people report 5+ consent violations. However the percentage of those whose consent was violated 5 or more times were similar across power exchange identities: top, bottom, switch and other (see Table 15).

Table 15.	Yes *n* (%) *N* Total
Gender Identity	
Females	116 (15%) 751
Males	32 (15%) 209
Gender queer	21 (27%) 78
Transgender	11 (30%) 37
Other	3 (14%) 21
Sexual Orientation	
Asexual	3 (15%) 20
Bisexual	43 (13%) 323
Gay/Lesbian	10 (13%) 79
Heterosexual	58 (18%) 332
Pansexual	41 (19%) 220
Other	29 (24%) 122
Power Exchange Identity	
Top	23 (16%) 145
Bottom	73 (15%) 476
Switch	72 (18%) 400
Other	13 (18%) 71

When was consent violated the first time?

One-fourth of the respondents said their pre-negotiated limits were violated before they started to participate on BDSM websites or attending a BDSM meeting, club, munch, party or event. It is clear that the majority of first consent violations occurred before they participated or within the first three years of participation in BDSM (see Table 16).

Table 16.	Top (1165)	Bottom (1694)	Switch (1447)	Other (272)
Had not participated yet	18 (15%)	91 (19%)	78 (20%)	6 (8%)
< 1 year	37 (30%)	134 (28%)	116 (30%)	24 (33%)
1-3 years	26 (21%)	131 (27%)	92 (23%)	22 (30%)
3-5 years	14 (11%)	55 (11%)	45 (12%)	5 (7%)
5-10 years	17 (14%)	40 (8%)	35 (9%)	11 (15%)
10-15 years	2 (2%)	12 (3%)	11 (3%)	3 (4%)
15-20 years	4 (3%)	11 (2%)	12 (3%)	2 (3%)
20+ years	6 (5%)	7 (2%)	4 (1%)	1 (2%)
Total	124 (11%)	481 (28%)	393 (27%)	74 (27%)

When the question of when a power exchange bottoms' consent violation occurred was cross-referenced with their sexual identity, the same pattern of consent violations takes place in the first three years (see Table 17).

Table 17.	Other (108)	Masochist (149)	Sub (591)	Slave (86)	Property (16)	Girl/Boy (31)	Animal/etc (6)
Not participated	16 (15%)	18 (12%)	123 (21%)	17 (20%)	3 (19%)	6 (19%)	2 (33%)
< 1 year	28 (26%)	45 (30%)	192 (33%)	18 (21%)	3 (19%)	4 (12.9)	3 (50%)
1-3 years	26 (24%)	41 (28%)	138 (23%)	21 (24%)	3 (19%)	12 (39%)	1 (17%)
3-5 years	11 (10%)	17 (11%)	63 (11%)	8 (9%)	4 (25%)	3 (10%)	-
5-10 years	20 (19%)	17 (11%)	38 (6%)	11 (13%)	1 (6%)	3 (10%)	-
10-15 years	2 (2%)	4 (3%)	14 (2%)	3 (4%)	1 (6%)	3 (10%)	-
15-20 years	3 (3%)	3 (2%)	16 (3%)	4 (5%)	-	-	-
20+ years	1 (0.9%)	4 (3%)	6 (1%)	2 (2%)	1 (6%)	-	-
Total	107	149	590	84 (	16	31	6

How was consent violated?

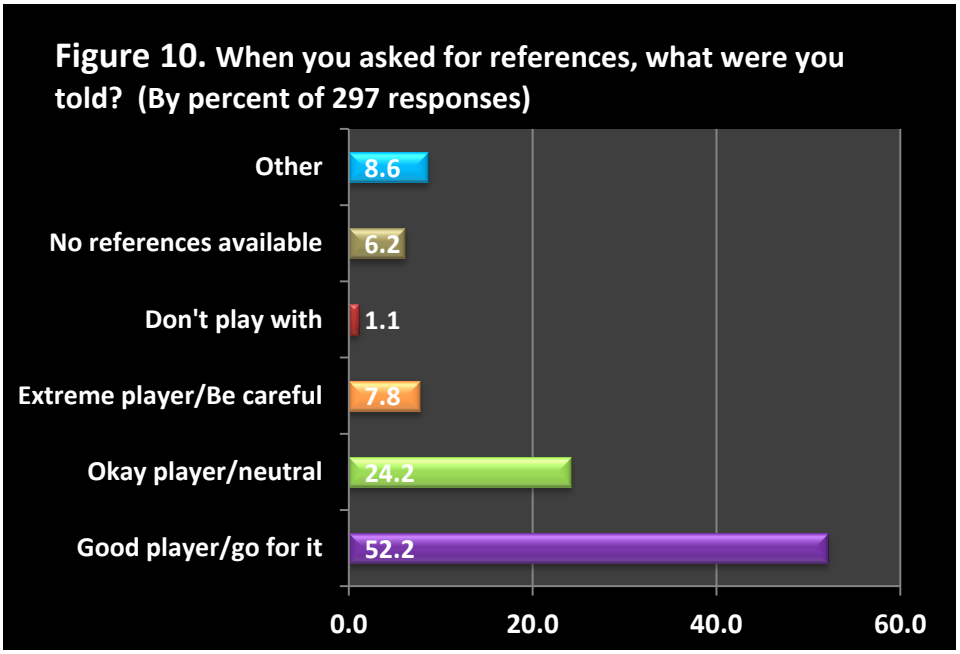
991 people reported what was done to them nonconsensually, and many checked more than one answer. The largest percentage of participants said that they were nonconsensually penetrated in the vagina by a penis, finger or dildo (29%). One-fourth said they were touched nonconsensually in a way that violated their pre-negotiated limits, while one in five said they were touched on the genitals or breasts, penetrated in the ass by a penis/finger or dildo, punched and/or humiliated (see Table 18). Answers that drew less than 1% include videotaping, electrical play, fire play, tickling, kissing and involving other people.

Table 18.	Responses
Penetration in the vagina by a penis, finger or dildo	29% 289
Touching	26% 258
Penetration in the ass by a penis/finger or dildo	21% 206
Punching/hitting	21% 209
Touch on the genitals or breasts	20% 202
Humiliation	20% 204
Slapping	16% 157
Forced to give or receive oral sex	16% 163
Choking	15% 149
Bondage	11% 107
Spanking	11% 112
Flogging	7% 73
Knifeplay or bloodplay	5% 49
Gag	5% 49
Watersports	4% 38
Blindfold	4% 37
No protection during sex	3% 32
Biting	1% 12

As for rape in a BDSM context: 28% of the females who were violated were raped by a penis in the ass or vagina while 31% of the gay males who were violated were raped by a penis in the ass. 25% of the females who were violated were penetrated by fingers or dildos, while 19% of the gay males who were violated were penetrated by fingers or dildos.

In addition, in the main question set, nearly half (608 people out of 1,309 respondents) who reported that their pre-negotiated limits and/or safeword were violated in a BDSM context also reported that they had been sexually assaulted as an adult. Compared to the respondents who have not had their pre-negotiated limits or safeword violated (3,124 people), only 26% (809 people) said they have been sexually assaulted as an adult outside of a BDSM context.

References



One-third of those who were violated (347 of 1,066 people) have heard since of other people who have been violated by the same person.

Only 28% of those who were violated asked for references prior to the scene. Of those 297 people, they received 370 references. 20 people said there were no references available (6%). The remaining 277 people reported getting 302 good and/or okay/neutral references on the person who violated their consent (82% of the total references) (see Figure 10).

Reporting

58% of the consent violations took place in the violator's home, their joint home or the home of the person whose consent was violated. For the 334 people (32%) who were violated at a BDSM group or private play party, only 1 in 4 (83 people) reported it to the organizers. 34% of those people said the organizers weren't helpful at all.

Among those who didn't report it to the organizers, 223 people responded why not (see Table 19). Nearly half of the violations that happened at an event or party weren't reported because the violation wasn't bad enough or they dealt with it themselves.

Table 19.	**223 Responses**
Too scared	17 (8%)
Organizer involved	39 (17%)
Not bad enough	52 (23%)
Dealt with it myself	53 (24%)
Confused	62 (28%)

Only 29 people (2.7% of the 1,041 people who answered the question) say that they reported the consent violation to the police. 12 of those people were referred to victim services. In more than half the cases (15 people), the local District Attorney didn't prosecute. In only 2 of the cases there were convictions. When asked if the police were helpful, more than half said the police weren't helpful at all.

1,001 people responded to the question of why they didn't report to the police. For nearly half of the violations, it wasn't considered bad enough to report (see Table 20).

Table 20.	**Responses**
It wasn't bad enough to report	46% 460
It could have caused too much trouble for me	18% 181
Didn't think police would believe me/police mistrust	12% 123
Confused	12% 116
I didn't want to get them in trouble	5% 45
Too scared	4% 36
I was okay with it	4% 36

96 people experienced an injury that required medical attention (2% of the total survey respondents and 7% of the number of people who reported a violation of safeword and/or pre-negotiated limits). Only ½ of one percent of the survey respondents (23 people) reported receiving a serious physical injury that was life-threatening or serious enough to cause dysfunction in an organ or limb.

33 people went to the hospital and only 4 people weren't happy with how helpful the hospital was. Hospitals are known for asking persistent questions about abuse when there are suspicious injuries and therefore were typically seen as helpful by people who were violated.

144 people (14% of 1,039) accessed victim services, with 75% of those people seeing a mental health care provider. In all, 90% said the service providers were helpful.

Consensual Nonconsent Relationships

40% of the respondents (1,844 people) have voluntarily engaged in consensual nonconsent (CNC) scene in which one or more people give up the right to withdraw consent for the duration of the scene, or a relationship that included consensual nonconsent. Among those who reported in engaging in CNC, 14% (260 people) said their pre-negotiated limits had been

violated in a CNC scene or relationship. That's nearly half the rate of consent violations that were reported by all of the respondents.

When asked if their pre-negotiated limits have been violated in a kink scene of any kind, 22% of the people who engage in CNC scenes said yes, compared to 29% of people have not engaged in a CNC scene who said yes. These results may indicate that the additional discussion and negotiation that it takes to engage in CNC is one of the keys to gaining fully informed consent.

Repercussions

When participants who reported a consent violation were asked to consider all of their experiences, 60% said their preferred BDSM groups, events, and websites are safer for them than mainstream society, while 26% said it was about as safe as mainstream society. Only 14% said the BDSM community was riskier for them. These results may suggest that BDSM groups provide significant education and services.

Consent Violators

Nearly 3% (129 people) reported that they have violated someone's pre-negotiated limits. 40% of those people say they've done it more than one time. 30% said the first time they violated someone's limits happened before they began to participate on BDSM websites or attended a BDSM meeting, club, munch, party or event.

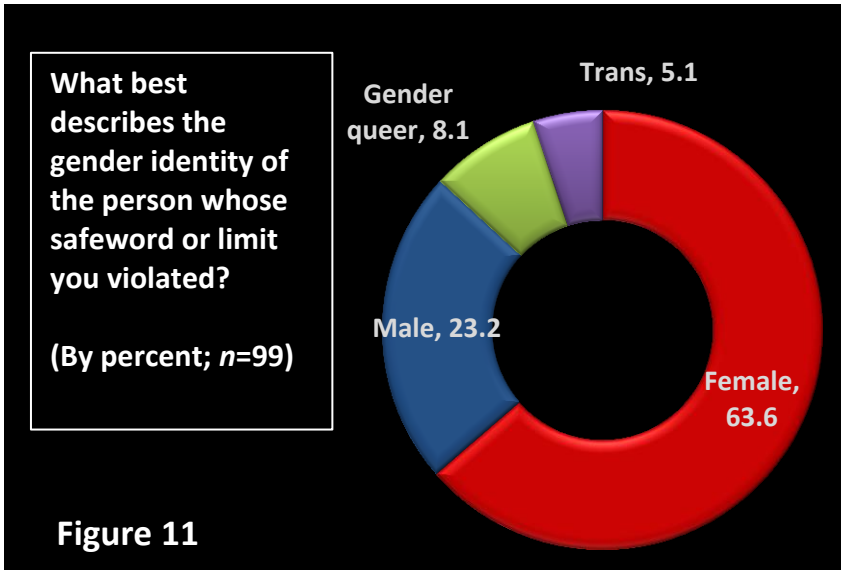
65% said the person they violated either wasn't in the BDSM community or had been participating for less than 3 years. 80% identified themselves as the top during the violation. 20% said they held a leadership role in a BDSM-leather-fetish group or event at the time it happened, which correlates with the report by 1 in 5 of the respondents who were violated that it was done by a community organizer.

A smaller percentage (1%) admitted they ignored someone's safeword. On the other hand, 486 people (11%) admitted touching someone without permission at a BDSM event, munch, party or workshop.

Of the 97 people who answered the question of why they violated someone's pre-negotiated limits, one in three said it was a misunderstanding or miscommunication (see Table 21). Three times as many said it was an accident or part of their dynamic compared to the complainants. Twice as many said it was a misunderstanding or miscommunication. Lack of skills was roughly similar between the two. Nobody said they were a predator, but 10 people admitted violating someone's consent because they got caught up or thought they could get away with it.

Table 21.	Responses
It was because of alcohol	>1% 1
Renegotiation	3% 3
Thought I could get away with it	4% 4
Got caught up	6% 6
Lack of skills or knowledge	14% 13
It was an accident	19% 18
It was part of our dynamic	24% 23
Misunderstanding or miscommunication	30% 29

They reported that 65% of the people they violated were female while 23% were male (see Figure 11).



False accusations

Out of 4,578 respondents, only 7 people reported they had been falsely accused and reported to the police (0.1% of the sample).

Just over 3% of the respondents (140) say they were falsely accused within the BDSM community of touching someone without permission at an event or party. Just over 3% (137

people) reported being falsely accused of violating someone's pre-negotiated limits. 1 in 5 of those people report they've been falsely accused more than once.

Just under 2% report being falsely accused of violating a safeword or safesign. Of those 91 people, 18% say they've been falsely accused more than once.

As far as the respondents who reported their consent was violated, 14% (140 people) say they were accused of making a false accusation when they talked about what happened.

Section IV: Conclusions

Types of Consent Violations

In this survey, 29% of the respondents reported their pre-negotiated limits and/or their safeword have been violated in a BDSM context (1,307 of the 4,503 respondents who answered both questions), (see Figure 4). 747 (31%) self-identified females report their consent was violated, while 13% of the males (213 respondents) reported their consent was violated (See Table 9).

8.9% (400/4511) of the people within this survey reported experiencing nonconsensual oral, anal or vaginal sexual experiences while participating in BDSM. The gender break down is: 12.5% women (314/2511), 3% men (52/1651), 10.6% gender queer (24/226), and 8.7% transgender (10/115). By comparison, several surveys of the general population have found approximately 11-18% of women and 1-3% of men report experiencing forcible sexual assault in their lifetime, with even more (45% of women and 22% of men) encountering other forms of sexual violence.[ii]

In the BDSM context, 1 in 3 (381 people) who answered the detailed question set reported that the consent violation was caused by an accident, miscommunication, a lack of skills or knowledge, or that it was part of their dynamic of pushing limits, and they were ultimately okay with it (see Table 4). The majority of those reporting a consent violation say they were manipulated/coerced (33%) or attacked by a predator (26%). This is a much more nuanced view of consent violations than the results of NCSF's 2012 Consent Survey, in which 33% of the respondents reported their pre-negotiated limits and/or safeword were violated.

As for the severity of the violations, half of the respondents said it wasn't bad enough to report to the police or to community organizers (if it happened at a BDSM event or party). 96 people (2% of the survey sample) reported an injury that required some kind of medical attention. One-half of 1% (23 people) reported receiving a serious physical injury that was life-threatening or serious enough to cause dysfunction in an organ or limb.

Who Violates Consent

Busting the sexist notion that only men violate consent: 78% (841 of the violators) were male, while 19% (204) were female (see Figure 8). However, 65% of the violators were identified as heterosexual while only 40% of the sample self-identified as heterosexual (conversely, heterosexuals were violated at the lowest rate—18%).

One in five (220) people reported that the person who violated their consent held a leadership role in a BDSM-leather-fetish group or event at the time it happened. Serial predators are an issue that involves potential civil liability for group and events: nearly 1 in 3 people know of someone else who was violated by the same person who violated their safeword or pre-negotiated limits. This indicates that self-policing efforts could be heightened to remove serial violators from kink events, and that those self-policing efforts should apply equally to volunteer organizers and presenters who have violated someone's consent.

In order for the community to work, it must work for the least socialized, least personally responsible, least educated members. That means that groups won't hear about consent violations if complainants believe the violator holds closer personal relationships with the event organizers than themselves. This remains true even if the potential complainant is only imagining this and it isn't actually true, so clear and impartial mechanisms for how groups deal with consent violations need to be set in place. (See NCSF's Guide for Groups, Dealing with Consent Violations, Drawing the Line and Liability Issues for Groups.)

When Consent is Violated

1 in 4 people say their pre-negotiated limits were violated before they started to participate on BDSM websites or before attending a BDSM meeting, club, munch, party or event. The majority of first consent violations occur before someone participates in BDSM groups and events or within the first three years of going to BDSM groups and events: 775 people, 72% of the 1072 people who responded to the question (see Table 16).

Newbies are in the "red zone" for violations and need to be made aware of the risks and given extra support and education about informed consent by community groups and events.

Frequency of Violations

60% of the people who reported having their pre-negotiated limits violated were violated two or more times (see Figure 9). In addition, nearly half (608/1,309 respondents) who reported their consent was violated within a BDSM scene or relationship reported they had been sexually assaulted as an adult outside a BDSM context. By comparison, only 26% of those

whose consent wasn't violated have been sexually assaulted as an adult outside a BDSM context.

While some survivors may become overly cautious about everybody, other traumatized people have a harder time forming accurate assessments of danger and are subject to revictimization.[iii] These people need more help in developing protective mechanisms and extra vigilance with respect to boundaries. They may be working through traumatization, but they can harm others as well as themselves. People who have had their consent violated 3 or more times are bringing some vulnerability to the table that neutralizes the protective value of educational messages and the SSC and RACK philosophies.

Reporting

If you remove the respondents who stated the consent violation was not serious enough to report (496 people), 501 people chose not to report for other reasons. Only 29 people reported the violation to the police, despite the fact that 96 people experienced an injury that required some medical attention.

This is much worse than traditional reporting rates: according to the Justice Department's *National Crime Victimization Survey*: 2008-2012, sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes, with 68% of sexual assaults not reported.[iv] The under-reporting found in this survey may be due in part to the fact that the majority of kinky people are not out due to discrimination.

90% of the people who spoke to a service provider said they were helpful, which should encourage kinky people to report crimes to victim services and let the professional advocates help them report it to the police, if they choose to do so. The largest percentage (23%) of NCSF's 2014 Incident Reporting & Response cases involved assisting kinky people in accessing victim services, reporting an assault, sexual assault, blackmail or stalking to the police, and obtaining restraining orders.[v]

308 people (29% of respondents who described an incident in which they were violated) said it happened at a BDSM group or private play party, yet only 1 in 4 of those people reported it to the organizers. Of those, 1/3rd said the organizers weren't helpful at all. Groups can do a better job to encourage attendees to report consent violations and in dealing with consent violations.

References

Considering how often kinky educators recommend getting references as a way to screen partners, it's notable that only 28% of those who were violated asked for references prior to the scene.

Also of note is that the references they did get were not more useful in predicting consent violations: 82% of the total references were positive. However this survey doesn't capture all of the scenes that didn't take place because there were poor references.

False Accusations

A consistent 3% or less rate for false accusations was reported in regards to: nonconsensual touching at kink events, violating someone's safeword, and violating someone's pre-negotiated limits. That is a much smaller percentage than is commonly believed, likely because each false accusation attracts a lot of attention (much like the recent *Rolling Stone* article[vi]) while one in three of the kinky people who were violated say they never told anyone about what happened.

As the seriousness of the accusation rises, the percentage of false reports shrinks exponentially. Out of 4,578 respondents, only 7 people reported they had been falsely accused and reported to the police: 1/10 of 1% of the total. Only 16 people were falsely accused twice (or more) of violating a safeword (0.3%). And 30 people have been falsely accused twice (or more) of violating someone's pre-negotiated limits (.7%). This indicates how rare multiple false accusations are.

If you have any questions regarding the data in this survey, please contact NCSF at ncsfreedom@ncsfreedom.org

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[i] CARAS: https://carasresearch.org

[ii] Basile, Chen, Black, & Saltzman, 2007; Black, Basile, Breidling, Smith, Walters, Marrick, Chen, & Stevens, 2011; Tjaden, & Thoennes, 1998.

[iii] Van der Kolk, Bessel A. MD. "The Compulsion to Repeat the Trauma: Re-enactment, Revictimization, and Masochism", Psychiatric Clinics of North America, Volume 12, Number 2, Pages 389-411, June 1989.http://www.cirp.org/library/psych/vanderkolk/

[iv] The Justice Department, *National Crime Victimization Survey*: 2008-2012.

[v] NCSF: https://ncsfreedom.org/key-programs/incident-response/incident-response.html

[vi] Coronel, Sheila; Coll, Steve; Kravitz, Derek, April 05, 2015, "Rolling Stone and UVA: The Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism Report: An anatomy of a journalistic failure" *Rolling Stone*. http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/a-rape-on-campus-what-went-wrong-20150405