

For Presenters: What Exactly Does Your Kinky Audience Want?

Six Lessons from the CARAS BDSM Community Educational Needs Assessment (the CENA Project).

Background

The Community-Academic Consortium for Research on Alternative Sexualities (CARAS) conducted an educational needs assessment from February 10, 2009 until July 10, 2009 for a total of 6 months.

As of July 10, 2009, the online survey had:

1649 people initiated the survey.

8 refused to agree to take the survey – their data were removed.

23 skipped the Informed Consent page – their data were removed.

1,618 surveys with informed consent indicated were then available for analysis.

165 of those surveys were initiated by people who had no experience with organized BDSM educational events. Their responses to the last open-ended question will be included in the full report, and reported separately from the surveys of people who did have experience with organized BDSM educational events.

48 other surveys skipped the question about experience with organized BDSM educational events and did not finish the survey.

This left 1,405 usable surveys for the main analysis.
Attrition rate at this point: 14.8% lost/unusable data.

The Six Lessons for Presenters

#1 – Most presenters are doing very well

The overwhelming majority of people taking the CARAS CENA Project online survey are satisfied with the workshops, demos and presentations they attend.

The most important aspect of a presenter, from the learner's point of view, is that the presenter is *comfortable in front of an audience*. The second most important aspect of a presenter is that they are *prepared and organized*. The third most important aspect is that a presenter *takes questions from the audience*.

On all three characteristics, 91% of the respondents said they experienced these characteristics in their most recent experiences as learners of BDSM.



#2 – Men prefer learning in smaller groups, hands-on experience, and in private or BDSM spaces. Women prefer learning in larger groups, more talk-based learning, and in public spaces.

The age of the learner did not affect these relations.

In our sample, women were significantly more likely to be newer to BDSM, so it is difficult to tell if the difference is only gender-related, or if the preference for larger groups, talk-based formats and in public spaces is something about being new to the community. The number of transgender people responding to the survey was not very large (41 participants, 4.7% of sample), precluding any strong conclusions.

#3 – There is a mismatch between preferences of producers of BDSM educational events and learners

People who are responsible for finding presenters and producing events tend to prefer “panel presentations” and to want larger groups at events. But learners tend to prefer demonstrations and smaller groups. Presenters are sometimes caught between these two different aspirations.

#4 – There are 3 kinds of values about presentation events that learners care about:

- Physical Involvement
- Reputation of the Event Producer
- Specifics of Topics/Presenters

Some learners value hands-on and demonstration opportunities more than anything else.

Some learners value the track record and the reputation of the producer of the BDSM educational event more than anything else.

Some learners say the Specific Topic and Specific Presenter matter the most – and this kind of value is significantly more important for more experienced BDSM players and community members, and also for Female identified people.

#5 – There are four general motivations that learners bring with them to BDSM educational events

To learn a new kink - “**instrumental skill acquisition**” - about 20% of the sample rated this motivation as highly important

To explore community, to learn for a partner, to support a community organization, to meet others into kink, to have fun - “**Entering community**” - about 25% of sample rated as highly important



To meet play partners, or intimate relationship partners – **“Personal relationships”** - about 10% of the sample rated this as highly important

To hear speaker, to meet old friends, to network professionally, to support a community organization - **“Maintaining community”** – 22% of sample rate as highly important

#6 – Learners motivated by “wanting to learn a new kink” are different than other learners

Instrumental skill acquisition was the only motivation that correlated with favoring Internet as an educational resource

Instrumental skill acquisition was the only motivation that strongly associated with preference for workshops by local organizations

Instrumental skill acquisition was the only motivation that showed a clear preference for presenters to be both “learner sensitive” and “skilled” in presenting.

